00042979

00042979

Digitized with financial assistance from
Shri Brihad Bhartiya Samaj
on 11 March, 2020

THE POEMS OF ERNEST DOWSON

THE POEMS OF ERNEST DOWSON

WITH A MEMOIR BY
ARTHUR SYMONS

FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS BY
AUBREY BEARDSLEY

AND A PORTRAIT BY
WILLIAM ROTHENSTEIN

3818

42979

LONDON: JOHN LANE, THE BODLEY HEAD
NEW YORK: JOHN LANE COMPANY
TORONTO: BELL & COCKBURN: MCMXIII

891.8
Dowl Poe
42979

Fifth Edition

THE BALLANTYNE PRESS, TAVISTOCK ST. COVENT GARDEN LONDON

ERNEST DOWSON

I

THE death of Ernest Dowson will mean very little to the world at large, but it will mean a great deal to the few people who care passionately for poetry. A little book of verses, the manuscript of another, a one-act play in verse, a few short stories, two novels written in collaboration, some translations from the French, done for money; that is all that was left by a man who was undoubtedly a man of genius, not a great poet, but a poet, one of the very few writers of our generation to whom that name can be applied in its most intimate sense. People will complain, probably, in his verses, of what will seem to them the factitious melancholy, the factitious idealism, and (peeping through at a few rare moments) the factitious suggestions of riot. They will see only

a literary affectation, where in truth there is as genuine a note of personal sincerity as in the more explicit and arranged confessions of less admirable poets. Yes, in these few evasive, immaterial snatches of song, I find, implied for the most part, hidden away like a secret, all the fever and turmoil and the unattained dreams of a life which had itself so much of the swift, disastrous, and suicidal impetus of genius.

Ernest Christopher Dowson was born at The Grove, Belmont Hill, Lee, Kent, on August 2nd, 1867; he died at 26 Sandhurst Gardens, Catford, S.E., on Friday morning, February 23, 1900, and was buried in the Roman Catholic part of the Lewisham Cemetery on February 27. His great-uncle was Alfred Domett, Browning's "Waring," at one time Prime Minister of New Zealand, and author of "Ranolf and Amohia," and other poems His father, who had himself a taste for literature, lived a good deal in France and on the Riviera, on account of the delicacy of his health, and Ernest had a somewhat irregular education, chiefly out of England, before he entered Queen's College, Oxford. He left in 1887 without taking a degree, and came to London, where he lived for several

ERNEST DOWSON
(From a photograph)

years, often revisiting France, which was always his favourite country. Latterly, until the last year of his life, he lived almost entirely in Paris, Brittany, and Normandy. Never robust, and always reckless with himself, his health had been steadily getting worse for some years, and when he came back to London he looked, as indeed he was, a dying man. Morbidly shy, with a sensitive independence which shrank from any sort of obligation, he would not communicate with his relatives, who would gladly have helped him, or with any of the really large number of attached friends whom he had in London; and, as his disease weakened him more and more, he hid himself away in his miserable lodgings, refused to see a doctor, let himself half starve, and was found one day in a Bodega with only a few shillings in his pocket, and so weak as to be hardly able to walk, by a friend, himself in some difficulties, who immediately took him back to the bricklayer's cottage in a muddy outskirt of Catford, where he was himself living, and there generously looked after him for the last six weeks of his life.

He did not realise that he was going to die; and was full of projects for the future, when the

£600 which was to come to him from the sale of some property should have given him a fresh chance in the world; began to read Dickens, whom he had never read before, with singular zest; and, on the last day of his life, sat up talking eagerly till five in the morning. At the very moment of his death he did not know that he was dying. He tried to cough, could not cough, and the heart quietly stopped.

II

I cannot remember my first meeting with Ernest Dowson. It may have been in 1891, at one of the meetings of the Rhymers' Club, in an upper room of the "Cheshire Cheese," where long clay pipes lay in slim heaps on the wooden tables, between tankards of ale; and young poets, then very young, recited their own verses to one another with a desperate and ineffectual attempt to get into key with the Latin Quarter. Though few of us were, as a matter of fact, Anglo-Saxon, we could not help feeling that we were in London, and the atmosphere of London is not the atmosphere of

movements or of societies. In Paris it is the most natural thing in the world to meet and discuss literature, ideas, one's own and one another's work; and it can be done without pretentiousness or constraint, because, to the Latin mind, art, ideas, one's work and the work of one's friends, are definite and important things, which it would never occur to any one to take anything but seriously. In England art has to be protected not only against the world, but against one's self and one's fellow artist, by a kind of affected modesty which is the Englishman's natural pose, half pride and half self-distrust. So this brave venture of the Rhymers' Club, though it lasted for two or three years, and produced two little books of verse which will some day be literary curiosities, was not quite a satisfactory kind of *cénacle*. Dowson, who enjoyed the real thing so much in Paris, did not, I think, go very often; but his contributions to the first book of the club were at once the most delicate and the most distinguished poems which it contained. Was it, after all, at one of these meetings that I first saw him, or was it, perhaps, at another haunt of some of us at that time, a semi-literary tavern near Leicester Square, chosen for its convenient

position between two stage-doors? It was at the time when one or two of us sincerely worshipped the ballet; Dowson, alas! never. I could never get him to see that charm in harmonious and coloured movement, like bright shadows seen through the floating gauze of the music, which held me night after night at the two theatres which alone seemed to me to give an amusing colour to one's dreams. Neither the stage nor the stage-door had any attraction for him; but he came to the tavern because it was a tavern, and because he could meet his friends there. Even before that time I have a vague impression of having met him, I forget where, certainly at night; and of having been struck, even then, by a look and manner of pathetic charm, a sort of Keats-like face, the face of a demoralised Keats, and by something curious in the contrast of a manner exquisitely refined, with an appearance generally somewhat dilapidated. That impression was only accentuated later on, when I came to know him, and the manner of his life, much more intimately.

I think I may date my first impression of what one calls "the real man" (as if it were more real than the poet of the disembodied verses!) from an

evening in which he first introduced me to those charming supper-houses, open all night through, the cabmen's shelters. I had been talking over another vagabond poet, Lord Rochester, with a charming and sympathetic descendant of that poet, and somewhat late at night we had come upon Dowson and another man wandering aimlessly and excitedly about the streets. He invited us to supper, we did not quite realise where, and the cabman came in with us, as we were welcomed, cordially and without comment, at a little place near the Langham; and, I recollect, very hospitably entertained. The cooking differs, as I found in time, in these supper-houses, but there the rasher was excellent and the cups admirably clean. Dowson was known there, and I used to think he was always at his best in a cabmen's shelter. Without a certain sordidness in his surroundings he was never quite comfortable, never quite himself; and at those places you are obliged to drink nothing stronger than coffee or tea. I liked to see him occasionally, for a change, drinking nothing stronger than coffee or tea. At Oxford, I believe, his favourite form of intoxication had been haschisch; afterwards he gave up this somewhat

elaborate experiment in visionary sensations for readier means of oblivion; but he returned to it, I remember, for at least one afternoon, in a company of which I had been the gatherer and of which I was the host. I remember him sitting a little anxiously, with his chin on his breast, awaiting the magic, half-shy in the midst of a bright company of young people whom he had only seen across the footlights. The experience was not a very successful one; it ended in what should have been its first symptom, immoderate laughter.

Always, perhaps, a little consciously, but at least always sincerely, in search of new sensations, my friend found what was for him the supreme sensation in a very passionate and tender adoration of the most escaping of all ideals, the ideal of youth. Cherished, as I imagine, first only in the abstract, this search after the immature, the ripening graces which time can only spoil in the ripening, found itself at the journey's end, as some of his friends thought, a little prematurely. I was never of their opinion. I only saw twice, and for a few moments only, the young girl to whom most of his verses were to be written, and whose presence in his life may be held to account for much of that

astonishing contrast between the broad outlines of his life and work. The situation seemed to me of the most exquisite and appropriate impossibility. The daughter of a refugee, I believe of good family, reduced to keeping a humble restaurant in a foreign quarter of London, she listened to his verses, smiled charmingly, under her mother's eyes, on his two years' courtship, and at the end of two years married the waiter instead. Did she ever realise more than the obvious part of what was being offered to her, in this shy and eager devotion? Did it ever mean very much to her to have made and to have killed a poet? She had, at all events, the gift of evoking, and, in its way, of retaining, all that was most delicate, sensitive, shy, typically poetic, in a nature which I can only compare to a weedy garden, its grass trodden down by many feet, but with one small, carefully tended flower-bed, luminous with lilies. I used to think, sometimes, of Verlaine and his "girl-wife," the one really profound passion, certainly, of that passionate career; the charming, child-like creature, to whom he looked back, at the end of his life, with an unchanged tenderness and disappointment: "Vous n'avez rien compris à ma simplicité," as he lamented.

In the case of Dowson, however, there was a sort of virginal devotion, as to a Madonna ; and I think, had things gone happily, to a conventionally happy ending, he would have felt (dare I say ?) that his ideal had been spoilt.

But, for the good fortune of poets, things rarely do go happily with them, or to conventionally happy endings. He used to dine every night at the little restaurant, and I can always see the picture, which I have so often seen through the window in passing: the narrow room with the rough tables, for the most part empty, except in the innermost corner, where Dowson would sit with that singularly sweet and singularly pathetic smile on his lips (a smile which seemed afraid of its right to be there, as if always dreading a rebuff), playing his invariable after-dinner game of cards. Friends would come in during the hour before closing time ; and the girl, her game of cards finished, would quietly disappear, leaving him with hardly more than the desire to kill another night as swiftly as possible.

Meanwhile she and the mother knew that the fragile young man who dined there so quietly every day was apt to be quite another sort of person after

he had been three hours outside. It was only when his life seemed to have been irretrievably ruined that Dowson quite deliberately abandoned himself to that craving for drink, which was doubtless lying in wait for him in his blood, as consumption was also; it was only latterly, when he had no longer any interest in life, that he really wished to die. But I have never known him when he could resist either the desire or the consequences of drink. Sober, he was the most gentle, in manner the most gentlemanly of men; unselfish to a fault, to the extent of weakness; a delightful companion, charm itself. Under the influence of drink, he became almost literally insane, certainly quite irresponsible. He fell into furious and unreasoning passions; a vocabulary unknown to him at other times sprang up like a whirlwind; he seemed always about to commit some act of absurd violence. Along with that forgetfulness came other memories. As long as he was conscious of himself, there was but one woman for him in the world, and for her he had an infinite tenderness and an infinite respect. When that face faded from him, he saw all the other faces, and he saw no more difference than between sheep and sheep. Indeed, that curious love of the sordid,

so common an affectation of the modern decadent, and with him so genuine, grew upon him, and dragged him into more and more sorry corners of a life which was never exactly "gay" to him. His father, when he died, left him in possession of an old dock, where for a time he lived in a mouldering house, in that squalid part of the East End which he came to know so well, and to feel so strangely at home in. He drank the poisonous liquors of those pot-houses which swarm about the docks; he drifted about in whatever company came in his way; he let heedlessness develop into a curious disregard of personal tidiness. In Paris, Les Halles took the place of the docks. At Dieppe, where I saw so much of him one summer, he discovered strange, squalid haunts about the harbour, where he made friends with amazing innkeepers, and got into rows with the fishermen who came in to drink after midnight. At Brussels, where I was with him at the time of the Kermesse, he flung himself into all that riotous Flemish life, with a zest for what was most sordidly riotous in it. It was his own way of escape from life.

To Dowson, as to all those who have not been "content to ask unlikely gifts in vain," nature, life,

destiny, whatever one chooses to call it, that power which is strength to the strong, presented itself as a barrier against which all one's strength only served to dash one to more hopeless ruin. He was not a dreamer; destiny passes by the dreamer, sparing him because he clamours for nothing. He was a child, clamouring for so many things, all impossible. With a body too weak for ordinary existence, he desired all the enchantments of all the senses. With a soul too shy to tell its own secret, except in exquisite evasions, he desired the boundless confidence of love. He sang one tune, over and over, and no one listened to him. He had only to form the most simple wish, and it was denied him. He gave way to ill-luck, not knowing that he was giving way to his own weakness, and he tried to escape from the consciousness of things as they were at the best, by voluntarily choosing to accept them at their worst. For with him it was always voluntary. He was never quite without money; he had a little money of his own, and he had for many years a weekly allowance from a publisher, in return for translations from the French, or, if he chose to do it, original work. He was unhappy, and he dared not think. To unhappy men, thought,

if it can be set at work on abstract questions, is the only substitute for happiness; if it has not strength to overleap the barrier which shuts one in upon oneself, it is the one unwearying torture. Dowson had exquisite sensibility, he vibrated in harmony with every delicate emotion; but he had no outlook, he had not the escape of intellect. His only escape, then, was to plunge into the crowd, to fancy that he lost sight of himself as he disappeared from the sight of others. The more he soiled himself at that gross contact, the further would he seem to be from what beckoned to him in one vain illusion after another vain illusion, in the delicate places of the world. Seeing himself moving to the sound of lutes, in some courtly disguise, down an alley of Watteau's Versailles, while he touched finger-tips with a divine creature in rose-leaf silks, what was there left for him, as the dream obstinately refused to realise itself, but a blind flight into some Teniers kitchen, where boors are making merry, without thought of yesterday or to-morrow? There, perhaps, in that ferment of animal life, he could forget life as he dreamed it, with too faint hold upon his dreams to make dreams come true.

For, there is not a dream which may not come true, if we have the energy which makes, or chooses, our own fate. We can always, in this world, get what we want, if we will it intensely and persistently enough. Whether we shall get it sooner or later is the concern of fate; but we shall get it. It may come when we have no longer any use for it, when we have gone on willing it out of habit, or so as not to confess that we have failed. But it will come. So few people succeed greatly because so few people can conceive a great end, and work towards that end without deviating and without tiring. But we all know that the man who works for money day and night gets rich; and the man who works day and night for no matter what kind of material power, gets the power. It is the same with the deeper, more spiritual, as it seems vaguer issues, which make for happiness and every intangible success. It is only the dreams of those light sleepers who dream faintly that do not come true.

We get out of life, all of us, what we bring to it; that, and that only, is what it can teach us. There are men whom Dowson's experiences would have made great men, or great writers; for him they did very little. Love and regret, with here

and there the suggestion of an uncomforting pleasure snatched by the way, are all that he has to sing of; and he could have sung of them at much less "expense of spirit," and, one fancies, without the "waste of shame" at all. Think what Villon got directly out of his own life, what Verlaine, what Musset, what Byron, got directly out of their own lives! It requires a strong man to "sin strongly" and profit by it. To Dowson the tragedy of his own life could only have resulted in an elegy. "I have flung roses, roses, riotously with the throng," he confesses, in his most beautiful poem; but it was as one who flings roses in a dream, as he passes with shut eyes through an unsubstantial throng. The depths into which he plunged were always waters of oblivion, and he returned forgetting them. He is always a very ghostly lover, wandering in a land of perpetual twilight, as he holds a whispered *colloque sentimental* with the ghost of an old love:

> "Dans le vieux parc solitaire et glacé,
> Deux spectres ont évoqué le passé."

It was, indeed, almost a literal unconsciousness, as of one who leads two lives, severed from one another as completely as sleep is from waking.

Thus we get in his work very little of the personal appeal of those to whom riotous living, misery, a cross destiny, have been of so real a value. And it is important to draw this distinction, if only for the benefit of those young men who are convinced that the first step towards genius is disorder. Dowson is precisely one of the people who are pointed out as confirming this theory. And yet Dowson was precisely one of those who owed least to circumstances ; and, in succumbing to them, he did no more than succumb to the destructive forces which, shut up within him, pulled down the house of life upon his own head.

A soul "unspotted from the world," in a body which one sees visibly soiling under one's eyes ; that improbability is what all who knew him saw in Dowson, as his youthful physical grace gave way year by year, and the personal charm underlying it remained unchanged. There never was a simpler or more attaching charm, because there never was a sweeter or more honest nature. It was not because he ever said anything particularly clever or particularly interesting, it was not because he gave you ideas, or impressed you by any strength or originality, that you liked to be with him ; but

because of a certain engaging quality, which seemed unconscious of itself, which was never anxious to be or to do anything, which simply existed, as perfume exists in a flower. Drink was like a heavy curtain, blotting out everything of a sudden ; when the curtain lifted, nothing had changed. Living always that double life, he had his true and his false aspect, and the true life was the expression of that fresh, delicate, and uncontaminated nature which some of us knew in him, and which remains for us, untouched by the other, in every line that he wrote.

III

Dowson was the only poet I ever knew who cared more for his prose than his verse ; but he was wrong, and it is not by his prose that he will live, exquisite as that prose was at its best. He wrote two novels in collaboration with Mr. Arthur Moore: "A Comedy of Masks," in 1893, and "Adrian Rome," in 1899, both done under the influence of Mr. Henry James, both interesting because they were personal studies, and studies of

known surroundings, rather than for their actual value as novels. A volume of "Stories and Studies in Sentiment," called "Dilemmas," in which the influence of Mr. Wedmore was felt in addition to the influence of Mr. James, appeared in 1895. Several other short stories, among his best work in prose, have not yet been reprinted from the *Savoy*. Some translations from the French, done as hack-work, need not be mentioned here, though they were never without some traces of his peculiar quality of charm in language. The short stories were indeed rather "studies in sentiment" than stories; studies of singular delicacy, but with only a faint hold on life, so that perhaps the best of them was not unnaturally a study in the approaches of death: "The Dying of Francis Donne." For the most part they dealt with the same motives as the poems, hopeless and reverent love, the ethics of renunciation, the disappointment of those who are too weak or too unlucky to take what they desire. They have a sad and quiet beauty of their own, the beauty of second thoughts and subdued emotions, of choice and scholarly English, moving in the more fluid and reticent harmonies of prose almost as daintily as if it were moving to the

measure of verse. Dowson's care over English prose was like that of a Frenchman writing his own language with the respect which Frenchmen pay to French. Even English things had to come to him through France, if he was to prize them very highly; and there is a passage in "Dilemmas" which I have always thought very characteristic of his own tastes, as it refers to an "infinitesimal library, a few French novels, an Horace, and some well-thumbed volumes of the modern English poets in the familiar edition of Tauchnitz." He was Latin by all his affinities, and that very quality of slightness, of parsimony almost in his dealings with life and the substance of art, connects him with the artists of Latin races, who have always been so fastidious in their rejection of mere nature, when it comes too nakedly or too clamorously into sight and hearing, and so gratefully content with a few choice things faultlessly done.

And Dowson, in his verse (the "Verses" of 1896, "The Pierrot of the Minute," a dramatic phantasy in one act, of 1897, the posthumous volume "Decorations"), was the same scrupulous artist as in his prose, and more felicitously at home there. He was quite Latin in his feeling for youth.

and death, and "the old age of roses," and the pathos of our little hour in which to live and love; Latin in his elegance, reticence, and simple grace in the treatment of these motives; Latin, finally, in his sense of their sufficiency for the whole of one's mental attitude. He used the commonplaces of poetry frankly, making them his own by his belief in them: the Horatian Cynara or Neobule was still the natural symbol for him when he wished to be most personal. I remember his saying to me that his ideal of a line of verse was the line of Poe:

"The viol, the violet, and the vine";

and the gracious, not remote or unreal beauty, which clings about such words and such images as these, was always to him the true poetical beauty. There never was a poet to whom verse came more naturally, for the song's sake; his theories were all æsthetic, almost technical ones, such as a theory, indicated by his preference for the line of Poe, that the letter "v" was the most beautiful of the letters, and could never be brought into verse too often. For any more abstract theories he had neither tolerance nor need. Poetry as a philo-

sophy did not exist for him; it existed solely as the loveliest of the arts. He loved the elegance of Horace, all that was most complex in the simplicity of Poe, most birdlike in the human melodies of Verlaine. He had the pure lyric gift, unweighted or unballasted by any other quality of mind or emotion; and a song, for him, was music first, and then whatever you please afterwards, so long as it suggested, never told, some delicate sentiment, a sigh or a caress; finding words, at times, as perfect as the words of a poem headed, "O Mors! quam amara est memoria tua homini pacem habenti in substantiis suis."

There, surely, the music of silence speaks, if it has ever spoken. The words seem to tremble back into the silence which their whisper has interrupted, but not before they have created for us a mood, such a mood as the Venetian Pastoral of Giorgione renders in painting. Languid, half inarticulate, coming from the heart of a drowsy sorrow very conscious of itself, and not less sorrowful because it sees its own face looking mournfully back out of the water, the song seems to have been made by some fastidious amateur of grief, and it has all the sighs and tremors of the mood, wrought into a

faultless strain of music. Stepping out of a paradise in which pain becomes so lovely, he can see the beauty which is the other side of madness, and, in a sonnet, "To One in Bedlam," can create a more positive, a more poignant mood, with fine subtlety.

Here, in the moment's intensity of this comradeship with madness, observe how beautiful the whole thing becomes; how instinctively the imagination of the poet turns what is sordid into a radiance, all stars and flowers and the divine part of forgetfulness! It is a symbol of the two sides of his own life: the side open to the street, and the side turned away from it, where he could "hush and bless himself with silence." No one ever worshipped beauty more devoutly, and just as we see him here transfiguring a dreadful thing with beauty, so we shall see, everywhere in his work, that he never admitted an emotion which he could not so transfigure. He knew his limits only too well; he knew that the deeper and graver things of life were for the most part outside the circle of his magic; he passed them by, leaving much of himself unexpressed, because he would permit himself to express nothing imperfectly, or according to anything but his own conception of the dignity of poetry. In

the lyric in which he has epitomised himself and his whole life, a lyric which is certainly one of the greatest lyrical poems of our time, "Non sum qualis eram bonæ sub regno Cynaræ," he has for once said everything, and he has said it to an intoxicating and perhaps immortal music.

Here, perpetuated by some unique energy of a temperament rarely so much the master of itself, is the song of passion and the passions, at their eternal war in the soul which they quicken or deaden, and in the body which they break down between them. In the second book, the book of "Decorations," there are a few pieces which repeat, only more faintly, this very personal note. Dowson could never have developed; he had already said, in his first book of verse, all that he had to say. Had he lived, had he gone on writing, he could only have echoed himself; and probably it would have been the less essential part of himself; his obligation to Swinburne, always evident, increasing as his own inspiration failed him. He was always without ambition, writing to please his own fastidious taste, with a kind of proud humility in his attitude towards the public, not expecting or requiring recognition. He died obscure, having ceased to

care even for the delightful labour of writing. He died young, worn out by what was never really life to him, leaving a little verse which has the pathos of things too young and too frail ever to grow old.

ARTHUR SYMONS.

1900.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
In Preface : for Adelaide	xxxvii
A Coronal	3
Verses :	
Nuns of the Perpetual Adoration	5
Villanelle of Sunset	7
My Lady April	9
To One in Bedlam	10
Ad Domnulam Suam	11
Amor Umbratilis	13
Amor Profanus	15
Villanelle of Marguerites	17
Yvonne of Brittany	19
Benedictio Domini	21
Growth	22
Ad Manus Puellae	23
Flos Lunae	25
Non sum qualis eram bonae sub regno Cynarae	27
Vanitas	29

CONTENTS

VERSES :

Exile 31
Spleen 33
O Mors! quam amara est memoria tua homini pacem habenti in substantiis suis . . . 34
"You would have understood me, had you waited" 36
April Love 38
Vain Hope 39
Vain Resolves 41
A Requiem 43
Beata Solitudo 45
Terre Promise 47
Autumnal 48
In Tempore Senectutis 50
Villanelle of his Lady's Treasures . . . 52
Gray Nights 54
Vesperal 55
The Garden of Shadow 57
Soli cantare periti Arcades 58
On the Birth of a Friend's Child . . . 60
Extreme Unction 61
Amantium Irae 63
Impenitentia Ultima 65
A Valediction 67
Sapientia Lunae 68

CONTENTS

PAGE

VERSES :

"Cease smiling, Dear! a little while be sad" . 70
Seraphita 72
Epigram 73
Quid non speremus, Amantes? 74
Chanson sans Paroles 76
THE PIERROT OF THE MINUTE 81
DECORATIONS :
Beyond 118
De Amore 119
The Dead Child 122
Carthusians 124
The Three Witches 127
Villanelle of the Poet's Road 129
Villanelle of Acheron 131
Saint Germain-en-Laye 133
After Paul Verlaine—I 134
After Paul Verlaine—II 136
After Paul Verlaine—III 138
After Paul Verlaine—IV 139
To his Mistress 140
Jadis 142
In a Breton Cemetery 143
To William Theodore Peters on his Renaissance Cloak 144

CONTENTS

PAGE

DECORATIONS :

The Sea-Change 146
Dregs 148
A Song 149
Breton Afternoon 151
Venite Descendamus 153
Transition 154
Exchanges 155
To a Lady asking Foolish Questions 156
Rondeau 158
Moritura 159
Libera Me 161
To a Lost Love 163
Wisdom 164
In Spring 165
A Last Word 166

ILLUSTRATIONS

Ernest Dowson . . . . . *Frontispiece*
(From a Drawing by Mr. William Rothenstein, by whose courtesy it has been reproduced)

Ernest Dowson . . . . . *To face page* vi
(From a Portrait taken presumably whilst he was at Oxford)

The following designs are by the late Aubrey Beardsley and appeared in the original edition of "The Pierrot of the Minute," published in 1899

Initial . . . . . *Page* 81
Half Title . . . . . *To face page* 82
Frontispiece . . . . . „ 86
Heading . . . . . „ 100
Cul de Lampe . . . . . „ 116

IN PREFACE: FOR ADELAIDE

TO you, who are my verses, as on some very future day, if you ever care to read them, you will understand, would it not be somewhat trivial to dedicate any one verse, as I may do, in all humility, to my friends? Trivial, too, perhaps, only to name you even here? Trivial, presumptuous? For I need not write your name for you at least to know that this and all my work is made for you in the first place, and I need not to be reminded by my critics that I have no silver tongue such as were fit to praise you. So for once you shall go indedicate, if not quite anonymous; and I will only commend my little book to you in sentences far beyond my poor compass which will help you perhaps to be kind to it:

"*Votre personne, vos moindres mouvements me semblaient avoir dans le monde une importance extra-humaine. Mon cœur comme de la poussière se*

soulevait derrière vos pas. Vous me faisiez l'effet d'un clair-de-lune par une nuit d'été, quand tout est parfums, ombres douces, blancheurs, infini; et les délices de la chair et de l'âme étaient contenues pour moi dans votre nom que je me répétais en tachant de le baiser sur mes lèvres.

"*Quelquefois vos paroles me reviennent comme un écho lointain, comme le son d'une cloche apporté par le vent; et il me semble que vous êtes là quand je lis aes passages de l'amour dans les livres. . . . Tout ce qu'on y blâme d'exagéré, vous me l'avez fait ressentir.*"

PONT-AVEN, FINISTÈRE, 1896.

VERSES

Vitae summa brevis spem nos vetat incohare longam

THEY are not long, the weeping and the laughter,
Love and desire and hate :
I think they have no portion in us after
We pass the gate.

They are not long, the days of wine and roses :
Out of a misty dream
Our path emerges for a while, then closes
Within a dream.

A CORONAL

WITH HIS SONGS AND HER DAYS TO HIS LADY AND TO LOVE

VIOLETS and leaves of vine,
Into a frail, fair wreath
We gather and entwine:
A wreath for Love to wear,
Fragrant as his own breath,
To crown his brow divine,
All day till night is near.
Violets and leaves of vine
We gather and entwine.

Violets and leaves of vine
For Love that lives a day,
We gather and entwine.
All day till Love is dead,
Till eve falls, cold and gray,

A CORONAL

These blossoms, yours and mine,
  Love wears upon his head.
Violets and leaves of vine
We gather and entwine.

Violets and leaves of vine,
  For Love when poor Love dies
We gather and entwine.
  This wreath that lives a day
  Over his pale, cold eyes,
Kissed shut by Proserpine,
  At set of sun we lay:
Violets and leaves of vine
We gather and entwine.

NUNS OF THE PERPETUAL ADORATION

CALM, sad, secure ; behind high convent walls,
These watch the sacred lamp, these watch and pray :
And it is one with them when evening falls,
And one with them the cold return of day.

These heed not time ; their nights and days they make
Into a long, returning rosary,
Whereon their lives are threaded for Christ's sake;
Meekness and vigilance and chastity.

A vowed patrol, in silent companies,
Life-long they keep before the living Christ.
In the dim church, their prayers and penances
Are fragrant incense to the Sacrificed.

NUNS OF THE ADORATION

Outside, the world is wild and passionate;
Man's weary laughter and his sick despair
Entreat at their impenetrable gate:
They heed no voices in their dream of prayer.

They saw the glory of the world displayed;
They saw the bitter of it, and the sweet;
They knew the roses of the world should fade,
And be trod under by the hurrying feet.

Therefore they rather put away desire,
And crossed their hands and came to sanctuary
And veiled their heads and put on coarse attire:
Because their comeliness was vanity.

And there they rest; they have serene insight
Of the illuminating dawn to be:
Mary's sweet Star dispels for them the night,
The proper darkness of humanity.

Calm, sad, secure; with faces worn and mild:
Surely their choice of vigil is the best?
Yea! for our roses fade, the world is wild;
But there, beside the altar, there, is rest.

VILLANELLE OF SUNSET

Come hither, Child ! and rest :
This is the end of day,
Behold the weary West!

Sleep rounds with equal zest
Man's toil and children's play :
Come hither, Child ! and rest.

My white bird, seek thy nest,
Thy drooping head down lay :
Behold the weary West !

Now are the flowers confest
Of slumber : sleep, as they !
Come hither, Child ! and rest.

Now eve is manifest,
And homeward lies our way :
Behold the weary West !

VILLANELLE OF SUNSET

Tired flower ! upon my breast,
I would wear thee alway :
Come hither, Child ! and rest ;
Behold, the weary West !

MY LADY APRIL

Dew on her robe and on her tangled hair;
Twin dewdrops for her eyes; behold her pass,
With dainty step brushing the young, green grass,
The while she trills some high, fantastic air,
Full of all feathered sweetness: she is fair,
And all her flower-like beauty, as a glass,
Mirrors out hope and love: and still, alas!
Traces of tears her languid lashes wear.

Say, doth she weep for very wantonness?
Or is't that she dimly doth foresee
Across her youth the joys grow less and less,
The burden of the days that are to be:
Autumn and withered leaves and vanity,
And winter bringing end in barrenness.

TO ONE IN BEDLAM

With delicate, mad hands, behind his sordid bars,
Surely he hath his posies, which they tear and
twine ;
Those scentless wisps of straw, that miserably line
His strait, caged universe, whereat the dull world
stares,

Pedant and pitiful. O, how his rapt gaze wars
With their stupidity ! Know they what dreams
divine
Lift his long, laughing reveries like enchaunted wine,
And make his melancholy germane to the stars?

O lamentable brother ! if those pity thee,
Am I not fain of all thy lone eyes promise me ;
Half a fool's kingdom, far from men who sow and
reap,
All their days, vanity? Better than mortal flowers,
Thy moon-kissed roses seem : better than love or
sleep,
The star-crowned solitude of thine oblivious hours!

AD DOMNULAM SUAM

Little lady of my heart!
Just a little longer,
Love me: we will pass and part,
Ere this love grow stronger.

I have loved thee, Child! too well,
To do aught but leave thee:
Nay! my lips should never tell
Any tale, to grieve thee.

Little lady of my heart!
Just a little longer,
I may love thee: we will part,
Ere my love grow stronger.

Soon thou leavest fairy-land;
Darker grow thy tresses:
Soon no more of hand in hand;
Soon no more caresses!

AD DOMNULAM SUAM

Little lady of my heart!
Just a little longer,
Be a child: then, we will part,
Ere this love grow stronger.

love [in the shade
[in retirement

AMOR UMBRATILIS

A GIFT of Silence, sweet!
Who may not ever hear:
To lay down at your unobservant feet,
Is all the gift I bear.

I have no songs to sing,
That you should heed or know:
I have no lilies, in full hands, to fling
Across the path you go.

I cast my flowers away,
Blossoms unmeet for you!
The garland I have gathered in my day:
My rosemary and rue.

I watch you pass and pass,
Serene and cold: I lay
My lips upon your trodden, daisied grass,
And turn my life away.

AMOR UMBRATILIS

Yea, for I cast you, sweet!
  This one gift, you shall take:
Like ointment, on your unobservant feet,
  My silence, for your sake.

Profane Love

AMOR PROFANUS

Beyond the pale of memory,
In some mysterious dusky grove;
A place of shadows utterly,
Where never coos the turtle-dove,
A world forgotten of the sun:
I dreamed we met when day was done,
And marvelled at our ancient love.

Met there by chance, long kept apart,
We wandered through the darkling glades;
And that old language of the heart
We sought to speak: alas! poor shades!
Over our pallid lips had run
The waters of oblivion,
Which crown all loves of men or maids.

In vain we stammered: from afar
Our old desire shone cold and dead:
That time was distant as a star,
When eyes were bright and lips were red.

And still we went with downcast eye
And no delight in being nigh,
Poor shadows most uncomforted.

Ah, Lalage ! while life is ours,
Hoard not thy beauty rose and white,
But pluck the pretty, fleeting flowers
That deck our little path of light :
For all too soon we twain shall tread
The bitter pastures of the dead :
Estranged, sad spectres of the night.

VILLANELLE OF MARGUERITES

"*A Little, passionately, not at all?*"
She casts the snowy petals on the air:
And what care we how many petals fall!

Nay, wherefore seek the seasons to forestall?
It is but playing, and she will not care,
A little, passionately, not at all!

She would not answer us if we should call
Across the years: her visions are too fair;
And what care we how many petals fall!

She knows us not, nor recks if she enthrall
With voice and eyes and fashion of her hair,
A little, passionately, not at all!

Knee-deep she goes in meadow grasses tall,
Kissed by the daisies that her fingers tear:
And what care we how many petals fall!

VILLANELLE OF MARGUERITES

We pass and go : but she shall not recall
What men we were, nor all she made us bear :
"*A little, passionately, not at all !*"
And what care we how many petals fall !

YVONNE OF BRITTANY

In your mother's apple-orchard,
Just a year ago, last spring :
Do you remember, Yvonne !
The dear trees lavishing
Rain of their starry blossoms
To make you a coronet ?
Do you ever remember, Yvonne ?
As I remember yet.

In your mother's apple-orchard,
When the world was left behind :
You were shy, so shy, Yvonne !
But your eyes were calm and kind
We spoke of the apple harvest,
When the cider press is set,
And such-like trifles, Yvonne !
That doubtless you forget.

YVONNE OF BRITTANY

In the still, soft Breton twilight,
We were silent ; words were few,
Till your mother came out chiding,
For the grass was bright with dew :
But I know your heart was beating,
Like a fluttered, frightened dove.
Do you ever remember, Yvonne ?
That first faint flush of love ?

In the fulness of midsummer,
When the apple-bloom was shed,
Oh, brave was your surrender,
Though shy the words you said.
I was glad, so glad, Yvonne !
To have led you home at last ;
Do you ever remember, Yvonne !
How swiftly the days passed ?

In your mother's apple-orchard
It is grown too dark to stray,
There is none to chide you, Yvonne !
You are over far away.
There is dew on your grave grass, Yvonne
But your feet it shall not wet :
No, you never remember, Yvonne !
And I shall soon forget.

Blessing of the Lord.

BENEDICTIO DOMINI

WITHOUT, the sullen noises of the street!
The voice of London, inarticulate,
Hoarse and blaspheming, surges in to meet
The silent blessing of the Immaculate.

Dark is the church, and dim the worshippers,
Hushed with bowed heads as though by some old spell,
While through the incense-laden air there stirs
The admonition of a silver bell.

Dark is the church, save where the altar stands,
Dressed like a bride, illustrious with light,
Where one old priest exalts with tremulous hands
The one true solace of man's fallen plight.

Strange silence here: without, the sounding street
Heralds the world's swift passage to the fire:
O Benediction, perfect and complete!
When shall men cease to suffer and desire?

GROWTH

I WATCHED the glory of her childhood change,
Half-sorrowful to find the child I knew,
(Loved long ago in lily-time)
Become a maid, mysterious and strange,
With fair, pure eyes—dear eyes, but not the eyes
I knew
Of old, in the olden time!

Till on my doubting soul the ancient good
Of her dear childhood in the new disguise
Dawned, and I hastened to adore
The glory of her waking maidenhood,
And found the old tenderness within her deepening
eyes,
But kinder than before.

To the hands of the Mistress.

AD MANUS PUELLAE

I WAS always a lover of ladies' hands!
Or ever mine heart came here to tryst,
For the sake of your carved white hands' commands;
The tapering fingers, the dainty wrist;
The hands of a girl were what I kissed.

I remember an hand like a *fleur-de-lys*
When it slid from its silken sheath, her glove;
With its odours passing ambergris:
And that was the empty husk of a love.
Oh, how shall I kiss your hands enough?

They are pale with the pallor of ivories;
But they blush to the tips like a curled sea-shell:
What treasure, in kingly treasuries,
Of gold, and spice for the thurible,
Is sweet as her hands to hoard and tell?

AD MANUS PUELLAE

I know not the way from your finger-tips,
Nor how I shall gain the higher lands,
The citadel of your sacred lips :
I am captive still of my pleasant bands,
The hands of a girl, and most your hands.

Moon-flower

FLOS LUNAE

I WOULD not alter thy cold eyes,
Nor trouble the calm fount of speech
With aught of passion or surprise.
The heart of thee I cannot reach :
I would not alter thy cold eyes !

I would not alter thy cold eyes ;
Nor have thee smile, nor make thee weep :
Though all my life droops down and dies,
Desiring thee, desiring sleep,
I would not alter thy cold eyes.

I would not alter thy cold eyes ;
I would not change thee if I might,
To whom my prayers for incense rise,
Daughter of dreams ! my moon of night !
I would not alter thy cold eyes.

FLOS LUNAE

I would not alter thy cold eyes,
With trouble of the human heart :
Within their glance my spirit lies,
A frozen thing, alone, apart ;
I would not alter thy cold eyes.

I am the same as I was under the sway of good Cynara.

NON SUM QUALIS ERAM BONAE SUB REGNO CYNARAE

Last night, ah, yesternight, betwixt her lips and mine
There fell thy shadow, Cynara! thy breath was shed
Upon my soul between the kisses and the wine;
And I was desolate and sick of an old passion,
Yea, I was desolate and bowed my head:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion.

All night upon mine heart I felt her warm heart beat,
Night-long within mine arms in love and sleep she lay;
Surely the kisses of her bought red mouth were sweet;
But I was desolate and sick of an old passion,
When I awoke and found the dawn was gray:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion.

NON SUM QUALIS

I have forgot much, Cynara! gone with the wind,
Flung roses, roses riotously with the throng,
Dancing, to put thy pale, lost lilies out of mind;
But I was desolate and sick of an old passion,
Yea, all the time, because the dance was long:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion.

I cried for madder music and for stronger wine,
But when the feast is finished and the lamps expire,
Then falls thy shadow, Cynara! the night is thine;
And I am desolate and sick of an old passion,
Yea, hungry for the lips of my desire:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion.

VANITAS

Beyond the need of weeping,
Beyond the reach of hands,
May she be quietly sleeping,
In what dim nebulous lands?
Ah, she who understands!

The long, long winter weather,
These many years and days,
Since she, and Death, together,
Left me the wearier ways:
And now, these tardy bays!

The crown and victor's token:
How are they worth to-day?
The one word left unspoken,
It were late now to say:
But cast the palm away!

VANITAS

For once, ah once, to meet her,
  Drop laurel from tired hands :
Her cypress were the sweeter,
  In her oblivious lands :
Haply she understands !

Yet, crossed that weary river,
  In some ulterior land,
Or anywhere, or ever,
  Will she stretch out a hand ?
And will she understand ?

EXILE

By the sad waters of separation
Where we have wandered by divers ways,
I have but the shadow and imitation
Of the old memorial days.

In music I have no consolation,
No roses are pale enough for me;
The sound of the waters of separation
Surpasseth roses and melody.

By the sad waters of separation
Dimly I hear from an hidden place
The sigh of mine ancient adoration:
Hardly can I remember your face.

If you be dead, no proclamation
Sprang to me over the waste, gray sea:
Living, the waters of separation
Sever for ever your soul from me.

EXILE

No man knoweth our desolation;
Memory pales of the old delight;
While the sad waters of separation
Bear us on to the ultimate night.

SPLEEN

I WAS not sorrowful, I could not weep,
And all my memories were put to sleep.

I watched the river grow more white and strange,
All day till evening I watched it change.

All day till evening I watched the rain
Beat wearily upon the window pane.

I was not sorrowful, but only tired
Of everything that ever I desired.

Her lips, her eyes, all day became to me
The shadow of a shadow utterly.

All day mine hunger for her heart became
Oblivion, until the evening came,

And left me sorrowful, inclined to weep,
With all my memories that could not sleep.

O MORS! QUAM AMARA EST MEMORIA TUA HOMINI PACEM HABENTI IN SUBSTANTIIS SUIS

Exceeding sorrow
  Consumeth my sad heart!
Because to-morrow
  We must depart,
Now is exceeding sorrow
  All my part!

Give over playing,
  Cast thy viol away:
Merely laying
  Thine head my way:
Prithee, give over playing,
  Grave or gay.

Be no word spoken;
  Weep nothing: let a pale

O MORS!

Silence, unbroken
  Silence prevail!
Prithee, be no word spoken,
  Lest I fail!

Forget to-morrow!
  Weep nothing: only lay
In silent sorrow
  Thine head my way:
Let us forget to-morrow,
  This one day!

Ah, dans ces mornes séjours
Les jamais sont les toujours

PAUL VERLAINE

You would have understood me, had you waited;
I could have loved you, dear! as well as he:
Had we not been impatient, dear! and fated
Always to disagree.

What is the use of speech? Silence were fitter:
Lest we should still be wishing things unsaid.
Though all the words we ever spake were bitter,
Shall I reproach you dead?

Nay, let this earth, your portion, likewise cover
All the old anger, setting us apart:
Always, in all, in truth was I your lover;
Always, I held your heart.

I have met other women who were tender,
As you were cold, dear! with a grace as rare.
Think you, I turned to them, or made surrender,
I who had found you fair?

YOU WOULD HAVE UNDERSTOOD ME

Had we been patient, dear! ah, had you waited,
I had fought death for you, better than he:
But from the very first, dear! we were fated
Always to disagree.

Late, late, I come to you, now death discloses
Love that in life was not to be our part:
On your low lying mound between the roses,
Sadly I cast my heart.

I would not waken you: nay! this is fitter;
Death and the darkness give you unto me;
Here we who loved so, were so cold and bitter,
Hardly can disagree.

APRIL LOVE

We have walked in Love's land a little way,
We have learnt his lesson a little while,
And shall we not part at the end of day,
With a sigh, a smile?

A little while in the shine of the sun,
We were twined together, joined lips, forgot
How the shadows fall when the day is done,
And when Love is not.

We have made no vows—there will none be broke,
Our love was free as the wind on the hill,
There was no word said we need wish unspoke,
We have wrought no ill.

So shall we not part at the end of day,
Who have loved and lingered a little while,
Join lips for the last time, go our way,
With a sigh, a smile?

VAIN HOPE

Sometimes, to solace my sad heart, I say,
Though late it be, though lily-time be past,
Though all the summer skies be overcast,
Haply I will go down to her, some day,
And cast my rests of life before her feet,
That she may have her will of me, being so sweet
And none gainsay!

So might she look on me with pitying eyes,
And lay calm hands of healing on my head:
"*Because of thy long pains be comforted;*
For I, even I, am Love: sad soul, arise!"
So, for her graciousness, I might at last
Gaze on the very face of Love, and hold Him fast
In no disguise.

Haply, I said, she will take pity on me,
Though late I come, long after lily-time,
With burden of waste days and drifted rhyme:
Her kind, calm eyes, down drooping maidenly,

VAIN HOPE

Shall change, grow soft: there yet is time, meseems,
I said, for solace; though I know these things are dreams
And may not be!

VAIN RESOLVES

I SAID : "There is an end of my desire :
  Now have I sown, and I have harvested,
And these are ashes of an ancient fire,
  Which, verily, shall not be quickened.
Now will I take me to a place of peace,
    Forget mine heart's desire ;
In solitude and prayer, work out my soul's release.

"I shall forget her eyes, how cold they were ;
  Forget her voice, how soft it was and low,
With all my singing that she did not hear,
  And all my service that she did not know.
I shall not hold the merest memory
    Of any days that were,
Within those solitudes where I will fasten me."

And once she passed, and once she raised her eyes,
  And smiled for courtesy, and nothing said :

And suddenly the old flame did uprise,
And all my dead desire was quickened.
Yea! as it hath been, it shall ever be,
Most passionless, pure eyes!
Which never shall grow soft, nor change, nor pity
me.

A REQUIEM

Neobule, being tired,
Far too tired to laugh or weep,
From the hours, rosy and gray,
Hid her golden face away.
Neobule, fain of sleep,
Slept at last as she desired!

Neobule! is it well,
That you haunt the hollow lands,
Where the poor, dead people stray,
Ghostly, pitiful and gray,
Plucking, with their spectral hands,
Scentless blooms of asphodel?

Neobule, tired to death
Of the flowers that I threw
On her flower-like, fair feet,
Sighed for blossoms not so sweet,
Lunar roses pale and blue,
Lilies of the world beneath.

A REQUIEM

Neobule! ah, too tired
Of the dreams and days above!
Where the poor, dead people stray,
Ghostly, pitiful and gray,
Out of life and out of love,
Sleeps the sleep which she desired.

Happy Solitude.

BEATA SOLITUDO

WHAT land of Silence,
Where pale stars shine
On apple-blossom
And dew-drenched vine,
Is yours and mine?

The silent valley
That we will find,
Where all the voices
Of humankind
Are left behind.

There all forgetting,
Forgotten quite,
We will repose us,
With our delight
Hid out of sight.

BEATA SOLITUDO

The world forsaken,
  And out of mind
Honour and labour,
  We shall not find
  The stars unkind.

And men shall travail,
  And laugh and weep;
But we have vistas
  Of gods asleep,
  With dreams as deep.

A land of Silence,
  Where pale stars shine
On apple-blossoms
  And dew-drenched vine,
  Be yours and mine!

TERRE PROMISE

Even now the fragrant darkness of her hair
Had brushed my cheek; and once, in passing by,
Her hand upon my hand lay tranquilly:
What things unspoken trembled in the air!

Always I know, how little severs me
From mine heart's country, that is yet so far;
And must I lean and long across a bar,
That half a word would shatter utterly?

Ah might it be, that just by touch of hand,
Or speaking silence, shall the barrier fall;
And she shall pass, with no vain words at all,
But droop into mine arms, and understand!

AUTUMNAL

Pale amber sunlight falls across
The reddening October trees,
That hardly sway before a breeze
As soft as summer : summer's loss
Seems little, dear ! on days like these

Let misty autumn be our part !
The twilight of the year is sweet :
Where shadow and the darkness meet
Our love, a twilight of the heart
Eludes a little time's deceit.

Are we not better and at home
In dreamful Autumn, we who deem
No harvest joy is worth a dream ?
A little while and night shall come,
A little while, then, let us dream.

AUTUMNAL

Beyond the pearled horizons lie
  Winter and night : awaiting these
  We garner this poor hour of ease,
Until love turn from us and die
  Beneath the drear November trees.

the time of old age.

IN TEMPORE SENECTUTIS

When I am old,
  And sadly steal apart,
Into the dark and cold,
  Friend of my heart!
Remember, if you can,
Not him who lingers, but that other man,
Who loved and sang, and had a beating heart,—
    When I am old!

When I am old,
  And all Love's ancient fire
Be tremulous and cold:
  My soul's desire!
Remember, if you may,
Nothing of you and me but yesterday,
When heart on heart we bid the years conspire
    To make us old.

IN TEMPORE SENECTUTIS

When I am old,
And every star above
Be pitiless and cold :
My life's one love !
Forbid me not to go :
Remember nought of us but long ago,
And not at last, how love and pity strove
When I grew old !

VILLANELLE OF HIS LADY'S TREASURES

I took her dainty eyes, as well
  As silken tendrils of her hair:
And so I made a Villanelle!

I took her voice, a silver bell,
  As clear as song, as soft as prayer;
I took her dainty eyes as well.

It may be, said I, who can tell,
  These things shall be my less despair?
And so I made a Villanelle!

I took her whiteness virginal
  And from her cheek two roses rare:
I took her dainty eyes as well.

I said: "It may be possible
  Her image from my heart to tear!"
And so I made a Villanelle.

VILLANELLE

I stole her laugh, most musical :
I wrought it in with artful care ;
I took her dainty eyes as well ;
And so I made a Villanelle.

GRAY NIGHTS

A WHILE we wandered (thus it is I dream!)
Through a long, sandy track of No Man's Land,
Where only poppies grew among the sand,
The which we, plucking, cast with scant esteem,
And ever sadlier, into the sad stream,
Which followed us, as we went, hand in hand,
Under the estrangèd stars, a road unplanned,
Seeing all things in the shadow of a dream.

And ever sadlier, as the stars expired,
We found the poppies rarer, till thine eyes
Grown all my light, to light me were too tired,
And at their darkening, that no surmise
Might haunt me of the lost days we desired,
After them all I flung those memories!

VESPERAL

STRANGE grows the river on the sunless evenings!
The river comforts me, grown spectral, vague and dumb:
Long was the day; at last the consoling shadows come:
Sufficient for the day are the day's evil things!

Labour and longing and despair the long day brings;
Patient till evening men watch the sun go west;
Deferred, expected night at last brings sleep and rest:
Sufficient for the day are the day's evil things!

At last the tranquil Angelus of evening rings
Night's curtain down for comfort and oblivion
Of all the vanities observèd by the sun:
Sufficient for the day are the day's evil things!

VESPERAL

So, some time, when the last of all our evenings
Crowneth memorially the last of all our days,
Not loth to take his poppies man goes down and
says,
"Sufficient for the day were the day's evil things!"

THE GARDEN OF SHADOW

Love heeds no more the sighing of the wind
Against the perfect flowers : thy garden's close
Is grown a wilderness, where none shall find
One strayed, last petal of one last year's rose.

O bright, bright hair ! O mouth like a ripe fruit !
Can famine be so nigh to harvesting ?
Love, that was songful, with a broken lute
In grass of graveyards goeth murmuring.

Let the wind blow against the perfect flowers,
And all thy garden change and glow with spring :
Love is grown blind with no more count of hours
Nor part in seed-time nor in harvesting.

Arcadians alone able to sing.

SOLI CANTARE PERITI ARCADES

Oh, I would live in a dairy,
And its Colin I would be,
And many a rustic fairy
Should churn the milk with me.

Or the fields should be my pleasure,
And my flocks should follow me,
Piping a frolic measure
For Joan or Marjorie.

For the town is black and weary,
And I hate the London street;
But the country ways are cheery,
And country lanes are sweet.

Good luck to you, Paris ladies!
Ye are over fine and nice,
I know where the country maid is,
Who needs not asking twice.

SOLI CANTARE PERITI ARCADES

Ye are brave in your silks and satins,
As ye mince about the Town ;
But her feet go free in pattens,
If she wear a russet gown.

If she be not queen nor goddess
She shall milk my brown-eyed herds,
And the breasts beneath her bodice
Are whiter than her curds.

So I will live in a dairy,
And its Colin I will be,
And it's Joan that I will marry,
Or, haply, Marjorie.

ON THE BIRTH OF A FRIEND'S CHILD

MARK the day white, on which the Fates have
smiled :
Eugenio and Egeria have a child.
On whom abundant grace kind Jove imparts
If she but copy either parent's parts.
Then, Muses! long devoted to her race,
Grant her Egeria's virtues and her face ;
Nor stop your bounty there, but add to it
Eugenio's learning and Eugenio's wit.

EXTREME UNCTION

Upon the eyes, the lips, the feet,
On all the passages of sense,
The atoning oil is spread with sweet
Renewal of lost innocence.

The feet, that lately ran so fast
To meet desire, are soothly sealed;
The eyes, that were so often cast
On vanity, are touched and healed.

From troublous sights and sounds set free;
In such a twilight hour of breath,
Shall one retrace his life, or see,
Through shadows, the true face of death?

Vials of mercy! Sacring oils!
I know not where nor when I come,
Nor through what wanderings and toils,
To crave of you Viaticum.

Yet, when the walls of flesh grow weak,
In such an hour, it well may be,
Through mist and darkness, light will break,
And each anointed sense will see.

AMANTIUM IRAE

When this, our rose, is faded,
And these, our days, are done,
In lands profoundly shaded
From tempest and from sun:
Ah, once more come together,
Shall we forgive the past,
And safe from worldly weather
Possess our souls at last?

Or in our place of shadows
Shall still we stretch an hand
To green, remembered meadows,
Of that old pleasant land?
And vainly there foregathered,
Shall we regret the sun?
The rose of love, ungathered?
The bay, we have not won?

AMANTIUM IRAE

Ah, child! the world's dark marges
  May lead to Nevermore,
The stately funeral barges
  Sail for an unknown shore,
And love we vow to-morrow,
  And pride we serve to-day:
What if they both should borrow
  Sad hues of yesterday?

Our pride! Ah, should we miss it,
  Or will it serve at last?
Our anger, if we kiss it,
  Is like a sorrow past.
While roses deck the garden,
  While yet the sun is high,
Doff sorry pride for pardon,
  Or ever love go by.

IMPENITENTIA ULTIMA

Before my light goes out for ever if God should
give me a choice of graces,
I would not reck of length of days, nor crave
for things to be ;
But cry: "One day of the great lost days, one face
of all the faces,
Grant me to see and touch once more and
nothing more to see.

For, Lord, I was free of all Thy flowers, but I
chose the world's sad roses,
And that is why my feet are torn and mine eyes
are blind with sweat,
But at Thy terrible judgment-seat, when this my
tired life closes,
I am ready to reap whereof I sowed, and pay my
righteous debt.

IMPENITENTIA ULTIMA

"But once before the sand is run and the silver thread is broken,
Give me a grace and cast aside the veil of dolorous years,
Grant me one hour of all mine hours, and let me see for a token
Her pure and pitiful eyes shine out, and bathe her feet with tears."

Her pitiful hands should calm, and her hair stream down and blind me,
Out of the sight of night, and out of the reach of fear,
And her eyes should be my light whilst the sun went out behind me,
And the viols in her voice be the last sound in mine ear.

Before the ruining waters fall and my life be carried under,
And Thine anger cleave me through as a child cuts down a flower,
I will praise Thee, Lord, in Hell, while my limbs are racked asunder,
For the last sad sight of her face and the little grace of an hour.

A VALEDICTION

If we must part,
Then let it be like this;
Not heart on heart,
Nor with the useless anguish of a kiss;
But touch mine hand and say:
"*Until to-morrow or some other day,*
If we must part."

Words are so weak
When love hath been so strong:
Let silence speak:
"*Life is a little while, and love is long;*
A time to sow and reap,
And after harvest a long time to sleep,
But words are weak."

SAPIENTIA LUNAE

THE wisdom of the world said unto me:
" *Go forth and run, the race is to the brave;*
Perchance some honour tarrieth for thee!"
" As tarrieth," I said, " for sure, the grave."
For I had pondered on a rune of roses,
Which to her votaries the moon discloses.

The wisdom of the world said: " *There are bays:*
Go forth and run, for victory is good,
After the stress of the laborious days."
"Yet," said I, "shall I be the worms' sweet food,"
As I went musing on a rune of roses,
Which in her hour, the pale, soft moon discloses

Then said my voices: " *Wherefore strive or run,*
On dusty highways ever, a vain race?
The long night cometh, starless, void of sun,
What light shall serve thee like her golden face?

For I had pondered on a rune of roses,
And knew some secrets which the moon discloses.

"Yea," said I, "for her eyes are pure and sweet
As lilies, and the fragrance of her hair
Is many laurels; and it is not meet
To run for shadows when the prize is here";
And I went reading in that rune of roses
Which to her votaries the moon discloses

Dum nos fata sinunt, oculos satiemus Amore

PROPERTIUS

CEASE smiling, Dear! a little while be sad,
Here in the silence, under the wan moon;
Sweet are thine eyes, but how can I be glad,
Knowing they change so soon?

For Love's sake, Dear, be silent! Cover me
In the deep darkness of thy falling hair:
Fear is upon me and the memory
Of what is all men's share.

O could this moment be perpetuate!
Must we grow old, and leaden-eyed and gray,
And taste no more the wild and passionate
Love sorrows of to-day?

Grown old, and faded, Sweet! and past desire,
Let memory die, lest there be too much ruth,
Remembering the old, extinguished fire
Of our divine, lost youth.

CEASE SMILING, DEAR

O red pomegranate of thy perfect mouth!
My lips' life-fruitage, might I taste and die
Here in thy garden, where the scented south
Wind chastens agony;

Reap death from thy live lips in one long kiss,
And look my last into thine eyes and rest:
What sweets had life to me sweeter than this
Swift dying on thy breast?

Or, if that may not be, for Love's sake, Dear!
Keep silence still, and dream that we shall lie,
Red mouth to mouth, entwined, and always hear
The south wind's melody,

Here in thy garden, through the sighing boughs,
Beyond the reach of time and chance and change,
And bitter life and death, and broken vows,
That sadden and estrange.

SERAPHITA

COME not before me now, O visionary face!
Me tempest-tost, and borne along life's passionate sea;
Troublous and dark and stormy though my passage be;
Not here and now may we commingle or embrace,
Lest the loud anguish of the waters should efface
The bright illumination of thy memory,
Which dominates the night; rest, far away from me,
In the serenity of thine abiding-place!

But when the storm is highest, and the thunders blare,
And sea and sky are riven, O moon of all my night!
Stoop down but once in pity of my great despair,
And let thine hand, though over late to help, alight
But once upon my pale eyes and my drowning hair,
Before the great waves conquer in the last vain fight.

EPIGRAM

Because I am idolatrous and have besought,
With grievous supplication and consuming prayer,
The admirable image that my dreams have wrought
Out of her swan's neck and her dark, abundant hair:
The jealous gods, who brook no worship save their own,
Turned my live idol marble and her heart to stone.

QUID NON SPEREMUS, AMANTES?

WHY is there in the least touch of her hands
  More grace than other womens' lips bestow,
If love is but a slave in fleshly bands
  Of flesh to flesh, wherever love may go?

Why choose vain grief and heavy-hearted hours
  For her lost voice, and dear remembered hair,
If love may cull his honey from all flowers,
  And girls grow thick as violets, everywhere?

Nay! She is gone, and all things fall apart;
  Or she is cold, and vainly have we prayed;
And broken is the summer's splendid heart,
  And hope within a deep, dark grave is laid.

As man aspires and falls, yet a soul springs
  Out of his agony of flesh at last,
So love that flesh enthralls, shall rise on wings
  Soul-centred, when the rule of flesh is past.

QUID NON SPEREMUS, AMANTES?

Then, most High Love, or wreathed with myrtle sprays,
Or crownless and forlorn, nor less a star,
Thee may I serve and follow, all my days,
Whose thorns are sweet as never roses are!

CHANSON SANS PAROLES

In the deep violet air,
Not a leaf is stirred;
There is no sound heard,
But afar, the rare
Trilled voice of a bird.

Is the wood's dim heart,
And the fragrant pine,
Incense, and a shrine
Of her coming? Apart,
I wait for a sign.

What the sudden hush said,
She will hear, and forsake,
Swift, for my sake,
Her green, grassy bed:
She will hear and awake!

CHANSON SANS PAROLES

She will hearken and glide,
From her place of deep rest,
Dove-eyed, with the breast
Of a dove, to my side:
The pines bow their crest.

I wait for a sign:
The leaves to be waved,
The tall tree-tops laved
In a flood of sunshine,
This world to be saved!

In the deep violet air,
Not a leaf is stirred;
There is no sound heard,
But afar, the rare
Trilled voice of a bird.

THE PIERROT OF THE MINUTE

THE CHARACTERS

A Moon Maiden

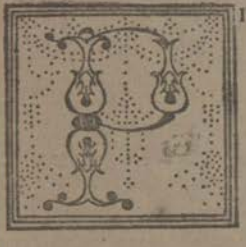
Pierrot

THE SCENE

A glade in the Parc du Petit Trianon. In the centre a Doric temple with steps coming down the stage. On the left a little Cupid on a pedestal. Twilight

THE PIERROT OF THE MINUTE

[*Pierrot enters with his hands full of lilies. He is burdened with a little basket. He stands gazing at the Temple and the Statue.*]



IERROT

My journey's end! This surely is the glade
Which I was promised: I have well obeyed!
A clue of lilies was I bid to find,
Where the green alleys most obscurely wind;
Where tall oaks darkliest canopy o'erhead,
And moss and violet make the softest bed;
Where the path ends, and leagues behind me lie
The gleaming courts and gardens of Versailles;
The lilies streamed before me, green and white:
I gathered, following; they led me right,
To the bright temple and the sacred grove:
This is, in truth, the very shrine of Love!

[*He gathers together his flowers and lays them at the foot of Cupid's statue; then he goes timidly up the first steps of the temple and stops.*]

PIERROT

It is so solitary, I grow afraid.
Is there no priest here, no devoted maid?
Is there no oracle, no voice to speak,
Interpreting to me the word I seek?

[*A very gentle music of lutes floats out from the temple. Pierrot starts back; he shows extreme surprise; then he returns to the foreground, and crouches down in rapt attention until the music ceases. His face grows puzzlea and petulant.*]

PIERROT

Too soon! too soon! in that enchanting strain,
Days yet unlived, I almost lived again:
It almost taught me that I most would know—
Why am I here, and why am I Pierrot?

[*Absently he picks up a lily which has fallen to the ground, and repeats:*]

PIERROT

Why came I here, and why am I Pierrot?

That music and this silence both affright;
Pierrot can never be a friend of night.
I never felt my solitude before—
Once safe at home, I will return no more.
Yet the commandment of the scroll was plain;
While the light lingers let me read again.

[*He takes a scroll from his bosom and reads:*]

PIERROT

"*He loves to-night who never loved before;*
Who ever loved, to-night shall love once more."
I never loved! I know not what love is.
I am so ignorant—but what is this?

[*Reads:*]

"*Who would adventure to encounter Love*
Must rest one night within this hallowed grove.
Cast down thy lilies, which have led thee on,
Before the tender feet of Cupidon."
Thus much is done, the night remains to me.
Well, Cupidon, be my security!
Here is more writing, but too faint to read.

[*He puzzles for a moment, then casts the scroll down.*]

PIERROT

Hence, vain old parchment. I have learnt thy rede!

[*He looks round uneasily, starts at his shadow; then discovers his basket with glee. He takes out a flask of wine, pours it into a glass, and drinks.*]

PIERROT

Courage, mon Ami! I shall never miss
Society with such a friend as this.
How merrily the rosy bubbles pass,
Across the amber crystal of the glass.
I had forgotten you. Methinks this quest
Can wake no sweeter echo in my breast.

[*Looks round at the statue, ana starts.*]

PIERROT

Nay, little god! forgive. I did but jest.

[*He fills another glass, and pours it upon the statue.*]

PIERROT

This libation, Cupid, take,
With the lilies at thy feet;
Cherish Pierrot for their sake:
Send him visions strange and sweet,
While he slumbers at thy feet.

Only love kiss him awake!
Only love kiss him awake!

[*Slowly falls the darkness, soft music plays, while Pierrot gathers together fern and foliage into a rough couch at the foot of the steps which lead to the Temple d'Amour. Then he lies down upon it, having made his prayer. It is night.*]

PIERROT

[*Softly.*]

Music, more music, far away and faint:
It is an echo of mine heart's complaint.
Why should I be so musical and sad?
I wonder why I used to be so glad?
In single glee I chased blue butterflies,
Half butterfly myself, but not so wise,
For they were twain, and I was only one.
Ah me! how pitiful to be alone.
My brown birds told me much, but in mine ear
They never whispered this—I learned it here:
The soft wood sounds, the rustlings in the breeze,
Are but the stealthy kisses of the trees.
Each flower and fern in this enchanted wood
Leans to her fellow, and is understood;

The eglantine, in loftier station set,
Stoops down to woo the maidly violet.
In gracile pairs the very lilies grow :
None is companionless except Pierrot.
Music, more music! how its echoes steal
Upon my senses with unlooked for weal.
Tired am I, tired, and far from this lone glade
Seems mine old joy in rout and masquerade.
Sleep cometh over me, now will I prove,
By Cupid's grace, what is this thing called love.

[*Sleeps.*]

[*There is more music of lutes for an interval, during which a bright radiance, white and cold, streams from the temple upon the face of Pierrot. Presently a Moon Maiden steps out of the temple; she descends and stands over the sleeper.*]

THE LADY

Who is this mortal
  Who ventures to-night
To woo an immortal ?
  Cold, cold the moon's light
For sleep at this portal,
  Bold lover of night.

Fair is the mortal
In soft, silken white,
Who seeks an immortal
Ah, lover of night,
Be warned at the portal,
And save thee in flight!

[*She stoops over him: Pierrot stirs in his sleep.*]

PIERROT

[*Murmuring.*]

Forget not, Cupid. Teach me all thy lore:
"*He loves to-night who never loved before.*"

THE LADY

Unwitting boy! when, be it soon or late,
What Pierrot ever has escaped his fate?
What if I warned him! He might yet evade,
Through the long windings of this verdant glade;
Seek his companions in the blither way,
Which, else, must be as lost as yesterday.
So might he still pass some unheeding hours
In the sweet company of birds and flowers.
How fair he is, with red lips formed for joy,
As softly curved as those of Venus' boy.

Methinks his eyes, beneath their silver sheaves,
Rest tranquilly like lilies under leaves.
Arrayed in innocence, what touch of grace
Reveals the scion of a courtly race?
Well, I will warn him, though, I fear, too late—
What Pierrot ever has escaped his fate?
But, see, he stirs, new knowledge fires his brain,
And Cupid's vision bids him wake again.
Dione's Daughter! but how fair he is,
Would it be wrong to rouse him with a kiss?

[*She stoops down and kisses him, then withdraws into the shadow.*]

PIERROT

[*Rubbing his eyes.*]

Celestial messenger! remain, remain;
Or, if a vision, visit me again!
What is this light, and whither am I come
To sleep beneath the stars so far from home?

[*Rises slowly to his feet.*]

PIERROT

Stay, I remember this is Venus' Grove,
And I am hither come to encounter——

THE LADY

[*Coming forward but veiled.*]

Love!

[*In ecstasy, throwing himself at her feet.*]

PIERROT

Then have I ventured and encountered Love?

THE LADY

Not yet, rash boy! and, if thou wouldst be wise,
Return unknowing; he is safe who flies.

PIERROT

Never, sweet lady, will I leave this place
Until I see the wonder of thy face.
Goddess or Naiad! lady of this Grove,
Made mortal for a night to teach me love,
Unveil thyself, although thy beauty be
Too luminous for my mortality.

THE LADY

[*Unveiling.*]

Then, foolish boy, receive at length thy will:
Now knowest thou the greatness of thine ill.

PIERROT

Now have I lost my heart, and gained my goal.

THE LADY

Didst thou not read the warning on the scroll?

[*Picking up the parchment.*]

PIERROT

I read it all, as on this quest I fared,
Save where it was illegible and hard.

THE LADY

Alack! poor scholar, wast thou never taught
A little knowledge serveth less than naught?
Hadst thou perused——but, stay, I will explain
What was the writing which thou didst disdain.

[*Reads:*]

"*Au Petit Trianon*, at night's full noon,
Mortal, beware the kisses of the moon!
Whoso seeks her she gathers like a flower—
He gives a life, and only gains an hour."

PIERROT

[*Laughing recklessly.*]

Bear me away to thine enchanted bower,
All of my life I venture for an hour.

THE LADY

Take up thy destiny of short delight;
I am thy lady for a summer's night.
Lift up your viols, maidens of my train,
And work such havoc on this mortal's brain
That for a moment he may touch and know
Immortal things, and be full Pierrot.
White music, Nymphs! Violet and Eglantine!
To stir his tired veins like magic wine.
What visitants across his spirit glance,
Lying on lilies, while he watch me dance?
Watch, and forget all weary things of earth,
All memories and cares, all joy and mirth,
While my dance woos him, light and rhythmical,
And weaves his heart into my coronal.
Music, more music for his soul's delight:
Love is his lady for a summer's night.

[*Pierrot reclines, ana gazes at her while she dances. The dance finished, she beckons to him: he rises dreamily, and stands at her side.*]

PIERROT

Whence came, dear Queen, such magic melody?

THE LADY

Pan made it long ago in Arcady.

PIERROT

I heard it long ago, I know not where,
As I knew thee, or ever I came here.
But I forget all things—my name and race,
All that I ever knew except thy face.
Who art thou, lady? Breathe a name to me,
That I may tell it like a rosary.
Thou, whom I sought, dear Dryad of the trees,
How art thou designate—art thou Heart's-Ease?

THE LADY

Waste not the night in idle questioning,
Since Love departs at dawn's awakening.

PIERROT

Nay, thou art right; what recks thy name or state,
Since thou art lovely and compassionate.
Play out thy will on me: I am thy lyre.

THE LADY

I am to each the face of his desire.

PIERROT

I am not Pierrot, but Venus' dove,
Who craves a refuge on the breast of love.

THE LADY

What wouldst thou of the maiden of the moon?
Until the cock crow I may grant thy boon.

PIERROT

Then, sweet Moon Maiden, in some magic car,
Wrought wondrously of many a homeless star—
Such must attend thy journeys through the skies,—
Drawn by a team of milk-white butterflies,
Whom, with soft voice and music of thy maids,
Thou urgest gently through the heavenly glades;
Mount me beside thee, bear me far away
From the low regions of the solar day;
Over the rainbow, up into the moon,
Where is thy palace and thine opal throne;
There on thy bosom——

THE LADY

Too ambitious boy!
I did but promise thee one hour of joy.
This tour thou plannest, with a heart so light,

Could hardly be completed in a night.
Hast thou no craving less remote than this?

PIERROT

Would it be impudent to beg a kiss?

THE LADY

I say not that: yet prithee have a care!
Often audacity has proved a snare.
How wan and pale do moon-kissed roses grow—
Dost thou not fear my kisses, Pierrot?

PIERROT

As one who faints upon the Libyan plain
Fears the oasis which brings life again!

THE LADY

Where far away green palm trees seem to stand
May be a mirage of the wreathing sand.

PIERROT

Nay, dear enchantress, I consider naught,
Save mine own ignorance, which would be taught.

THE LADY

Dost thou persist?

PIERROT

I do entreat this boon!

[*She bends forward, their lips meet: she withdraws with a petulant shiver. She utters a peal of clear laughter.*]

THE LADY

Why art thou pale, fond lover of the moon?

PIERROT

Cold are thy lips, more cold than I can tell
Yet would I hang on them, thine icicle!
Cold is thy kiss, more cold than I could dream
Arctus sits, watching the Boreal stream:
But with its frost such sweetness did conspire
That all my veins are filled with running fire;
Never I knew that life contained such bliss
As the divine completeness of a kiss.

THE LADY

Apt scholar! so love's lesson has been taught,
Warning, as usual, has gone for naught.

PIERROT

Had all my schooling been of this soft kind,
To play the truant I were less inclined.

Teach me again! I am a sorry dunce—
I never knew a task by conning once.

THE LADY

Then come with me! below this pleasant shrine
Of Venus we will presently recline,
Until birds' twitter beckon me away
To mine own home, beyond the milky-way.
I will instruct thee, for I deem as yet
Of Love thou knowest but the alphabet.

PIERROT

In its sweet grammer I shall grow most wise,
If all its rules be written in thine eyes.

[*The lady sits upon a step of the temple, and Pierrot leans upon his elbow at her feet, regarding her.*]

PIERROT

Sweet contemplation! how my senses yearn
To be thy scholar always, always learn.
Hold not so high from me thy radiant mouth,
Fragrant with all the spices of the South;
Nor turn, O sweet! thy golden face away,
For with it goes the light of all my day.

Let me peruse it, till I know by rote
Each line of it, like music, note by note;
Raise thy long lashes, Lady! smile again:
These studies profit me.

[*Taking her hand.*]

THE LADY

Refrain, refrain!

PIERROT

[*With passion.*]

I am but studious, so do not stir;
Thou art my star, I thine astronomer!
Geometry was founded on thy lip.

[*Kisses her hand.*]

THE LADY

This attitude becomes not scholarship!
Thy zeal I praise; but, prithee, not so fast,
Nor leave the rudiments until the last.
Science applied is good, but 'twere a schism
To study such before the catechism,
Bear thee more modestly, while I submit
Some easy problems to confirm thy wit.

PIERROT

In all humility my mind I pit
Against her problems which would test my wit.

THE LADY

[*Questioning him from a little book bound deliciously in vellum.*]

What is Love?
Is it a folly,
Is it mirth, or melancholy?
Joys above,
Are there many, or not any?
What is love?

PIERROT

[*Answering in a very humble attitude of scholarship.*]

If you please,
A most sweet folly!
Full of mirth and melancholy;
Both of these!
In its sadness worth all gladness,
If you please!

THE LADY

Prithee where,
Goes Love a-hiding?
Is he long in his abiding
Anywhere?

Can you bind him when you find him;
Prithee, where?

PIERROT

With spring days
Love comes and dallies:
Upon the mountains, through the valleys
Lie Love's ways.
Then he leaves you and deceives you
In spring days.

THE LADY

Thine answers please me: 'tis thy turn to ask.
To meet thy questioning be now my task.

PIERROT

Since I know thee, dear Immortal,
Is my heart become a blossom,
To be worn upon thy bosom.
When thou turn me from this portal,
Whither shall I, hapless mortal,
Seek love out and win again
Heart of me that thou retain?

THE LADY

In and out the woods and valleys,
Circling, soaring like a swallow,

Love shall flee and thou shalt follow:
Though he stops awhile and dallies,
Never shalt thou stay his malice!
Moon-kissed mortals seek in vain
To possess their hearts again!

PIERROT

Tell me, Lady, shall I never
Rid me of this grievous burden!
Follow Love and find his guerdon
In no maiden whatsoever?
Wilt thou hold my heart for ever?
Rather would I thine forget,
In some earthly Pierrette!

THE LADY

Thus thy fate, whate'er thy will is!
Moon-struck child, go seek my traces
Vainly in all mortal faces!
In and out among the lilies,
Court each rural Amaryllis:
Seek the signet of Love's hand
In each courtly Corisande!

PIERROT

Now, verily, sweet maid, of school I tire:
These answers are not such as I desire.

THE LADY

Why art thou sad?

PIERROT

I dare not tell.

THE LADY

[*Caressingly.*]

Come, say!

PIERROT

Is love all schooling, with no time to play?

THE LADY

Though all love's lessons be a holiday,
Yet I will humour thee: what wouldst thou play?

PIERROT

What are the games that small moon-maids enjoy,
Or is their time all spent in staid employ?

THE LADY

Sedate they are, yet games they much enjoy:
They skip with stars, the rainbow is their toy.

PIERROT

That is too hard!

THE LADY

For mortal's play.

PIERROT

What then?

THE LADY

Teach me some pastime from the world of men.

PIERROT

I have it, maiden.

THE LADY

Can it soon be taught?

PIERROT

A simple game, I learnt it at the Court.
I sit by thee.

THE LADY

But, prithee, not so near.

PIERROT

That is essential, as will soon appear.
Lay here thine hand, which cold night dews anoint,
Washing its white——

THE LADY

Now is this to the point?

PIERROT

Prithee, forbear! Such is the game's design.

THE LADY

Here is my hand.

PIERROT

I cover it with mine.

THE LADY

What must I next?

[*They play.*]

PIERROT

Withdraw.

THE LADY

It goes too fast.

[*They continue playing, until Pierrot catches her hand.*]

PIERROT

[*Laughing.*]

'Tis done. I win my forfeit at the last.

[*He tries to embrace her. She escapes; he chases her round the stage; she eludes him.*]

THE LADY

Thou art not quick enough. Who hopes to
catch
A moon-beam, must use twice as much despatch.

PIERROT

[*Sitting down sulkily.*]

I grow aweary, and my heart is sore,
Thou dost not love me ; I will play no more.

[*He buries his face in his hands : the lady stands over him.*]

THE LADY

What is this petulance?

PIERROT

'Tis quick to tell—
Thou hast but mocked me.

THE LADY

Nay ! I love thee well !

PIERROT

Repeat those words, for still within my breast
A whisper warns me they are said in jest.

THE LADY

I jested not: at daybreak I must go,
Yet loving thee far better than thou know.

PIERROT

Then, by this altar, and this sacred shrine,
Take my sworn troth, and swear thee wholly mine!
The Gods have wedded mortals long ere this.

THE LADY

There was enough betrothal in my kiss.
What need of further oaths?

PIERROT

That bound not thee!

THE LADY

Peace! since I tell thee that it may not be.
But sit beside me whilst I soothe thy bale
With some moon fancy or celestial tale.

PIERROT

Tell me of thee, and that dim, happy place
Where lies thine home, with maidens of thy race!

THE LADY

[*Seating herself.*]

Calm is it yonder, very calm ; the air
For mortal's breath is too refined and rare ;
Hard by a green lagoon our palace rears
Its dome of agate through a myriad years.
A hundred chambers its bright walls enthrone,
Each one carved strangely from a precious stone.
Within the fairest, clad in purity,
Our mother dwelleth immemorially :
Moon-calm, moon-pale, with moon stones on her gown
The floor she treads with little pearls is sown ;
She sits upon a throne of amethysts,
And orders mortal fortunes as she lists ;
I, and my sisters, all around her stand,
And, when she speaks, accomplish her demand.

PIERROT

Methought grim Clotho and her sisters twain
With shrivelled fingers spun this web of bane !

THE LADY

Theirs and my mother's realm is far apart,
Hers is the lustrous kingdom of the heart,

And dreamers all, and all who sing and love,
Her power acknowledge, and her rule approve.

PIERROT

Me, even me, she hath led into this grove.

THE LADY

Yea, thou art one of hers! But, ere this night,
Often I watched my sisters take their flight
Down heaven's stairway of the clustered stars
To gaze on mortals through their lattice bars;
And some in sleep they woo with dreams of bliss
Too shadowy to tell, and some they kiss.
But all to whom they come, my sisters say,
Forthwith forget all joyance of the day,
Forget their laughter and forget their tears,
And dream away with singing all their years—
Moon-lovers always!

[*She sighs.*]

PIERROT

Why art sad, sweet Moon?

[*Laughing.*]

THE LADY

For this, my story, grant me now a boon.

PIERROT

I am thy servitor.

THE LADY

Would, then, I knew
More of the earth, what men and women do.

PIERROT

I will explain.

THE LADY

Let brevity attend
Thy wit, for night approaches to its end.

PIERROT

Once was I a page at Court, so trust in me:
That's the first lesson of society.

THE LADY

Society?

PIERROT

I mean the very best
Pardy! thou wouldst not hear about the rest.
I know it not, but am a *petit maître*
At rout and festival and *bal champêtre*.

But since example be instruction's ease,
Let's play the thing.—Now, Madame, if you
please !

[*He helps her to rise, and leads her forward: then he kisses her hand, bowing over it with a very courtly air.*]

THE LADY

What am I, then ?

PIERROT

A most divine Marquise !
Perhaps that attitude hath too much ease.

[*Passes her.*]

Ah, that is better ! To complete the plan,
Nothing is necessary save a fan.

THE LADY

Cool is the night, what needs it ?

PIERROT

Madame, pray
Reflect, it is essential to our play.

THE LADY

[*Taking a lily.*]

Here is my fan!

PIERROT

So, use it with intent:
The deadliest arm in beauty's armament!

THE LADY

What do we next?

PIERROT

We talk!

THE LADY

But what about?

PIERROT

We quiz the company and praise the rout;
Are polished, petulant, malicious, sly,
Or what you will, so reputations die.
Observe the Duchess in Venetian lace,
With the red eminence.

THE LADY

A pretty face!

PIERROT

For something tarter set thy wits to search—
"She loves the churchman better than the church."

THE LADY

Her blush is charming; would it were her own!

PIERROT

Madame is merciless!

THE LADY

Is that the tone?

PIERROT

The very tone: I swear thou lackest naught.
Madame was evidently bred at Court.

THE LADY

Thou speakest glibly: 'tis not of thine age.

PIERROT

I listened much, as best becomes a page.

THE LADY

I like thy Court but little——

PIERROT

Hush! the Queen!
Bow, but not low—thou knowest what I mean.

THE LADY

Nay, that I know not!

PIERROT

Though she wear a crown,
'Tis from La Pompadour one fears a frown.

THE LADY

Thou art a child: thy malice is a game.

PIERROT

A most sweet pastime—scandal is its name.

THE LADY

Enough, it wearies me.

PIERROT

Then, rare Marquise,
Desert the crowd to wander through the trees.

[*He bows low, and she curtsies; they move round the stage. When they pass before the Statue he seizes her hand and falls on his knee.*]

THE LADY

What wouldst thou now ?

PIERROT

Ah, prithee, what, save thee !

THE LADY

Was this included in thy comedy ?

PIERROT

Ah, mock me not ! In vain with quirk and jest
I strive to quench the passion in my breast ;
In vain thy blandishments would make me play :
Still I desire far more than I can say.
My knowledge halts, ah, sweet, be piteous,
Instruct me still, while time remains to us,
Be what thou wist, Goddess, moon-maid, *Marquise*,
So that I gather from thy lips heart's ease,
Nay, I implore thee, think thee how time flies !

THE LADY

Hush ! I beseech thee, even now night dies.

PIERROT

Night, day, are one to me for thy soft sake.

[*He entreats her with imploring gestures, she hesitates: then puts her finger on her lip, hushing him.*]

THE LADY

It is too late, for hark! the birds awake.

PIERROT

The birds awake! It is the voice of day!

THE LADY

Farewell, dear youth! They summon me away.

[*The light changes, it grows daylight: and music imitates the twitter of the birds. They stand gazing at the morning: then Pierrot sinks back upon his bed, he covers his face in his hands.*]

THE LADY

[*Bending over him.*]

Music, my maids! His weary senses steep
In soft untroubled and oblivious sleep,

With mandragore anoint his tirèd eyes,
That they may open on mere memories,
Then shall a vision seem his lost delight,
With love, his lady for a summer's night.
Dream thou hast dreamt all this, when thou awake,
Yet still be sorrowful, for a dream's sake.
I leave thee, sleeper! Yea, I leave thee now,
Yet take my legacy upon thy brow:
Remember me, who was compassionate,
And opened for thee once, the ivory gate.
I come no more, thou shalt not see my face
When I am gone to mine exalted place:
Yet all thy days are mine, dreamer of dreams,
All silvered over with the moon's pale beams:
Go forth and seek in each fair face in vain,
To find the image of thy love again.
All maids are kind to thee, yet never one
Shall hold thy truant heart till day be done.
Whom once the moon has kissed, loves long and late,
Yet never finds the maid to be his mate.
Farewell, dear sleeper, follow out thy fate.

[*The Moon Maiden withdraws: a song is sung from behind: it is full day.*]

THE MOON MAIDEN'S SONG.

Sleep! Cast thy canopy
Over this sleeper's brain,
Dim grow his memory,
When he awake again.

Love stays a summer night,
Till lights of morning come;
Then takes her wingèd flight
Back to her starry home.

Sleep! Yet thy days are mine;
Love's seal is over thee:
Far though my ways from thine,
Dim though thy memory.

Love stays a summer night,
Till lights of morning come;
Then takes her wingèd flight
Back to her starry home.

[*When the song is finished, the curtain falls upon Pierrot sleeping.*]

THE END

DECORATIONS

BEYOND

Love's aftermath ! I think the time is now
That we must gather in, alone, apart
The saddest crop of all the crops that grow,
Love's aftermath.
Ah, sweet,—sweet yesterday, the tears that start
Can not put back the dial ; this is, I trow,
Our harvesting ! Thy kisses chill my heart,
Our lips are cold ; averted eyes avow
The twilight of poor love : we can but part,
Dumbly and sadly, reaping as we sow,
Love's aftermath.

DE AMORE

Shall one be sorrowful because of love,
Which hath no earthly crown,
Which lives and dies, unknown?
Because no words of his shall ever move
Her maiden heart to own
Him lord and destined master of her own:
Is Love so weak a thing as this,
Who can not lie awake,
Solely for his own sake,
For lack of the dear hands to hold, the lips to kiss,
A mere heart-ache?

Nay, though love's victories be great and sweet,
Nor vain and foolish toys,
His crowned, earthly joys,
Is there no comfort then in love's defeat?
Because he shall defer,
For some short span of years all part in her,

Submitting to forego
The certain peace which happier lovers know;
Because he shall be utterly disowned,
Nor length of service bring
Her least awakening:
Foiled, frustrate and alone, misunderstood discrowned,
Is Love less King?

Grows not the world to him a fairer place,
How far soever his days
Pass from his lady's ways,
From mere encounter with her golden face?
Though all his sighing be vain,
Shall he be heavy-hearted and complain?
Is she not still a star,
Deeply to be desired, worshipped afar,
A beacon-light to aid
From bitter-sweet delights, Love's masquerade?
Though he lose many things,
Though much he miss:
The heart upon his heart, the hand that clings,
The memorable first kiss;
Love that is love at all,
Needs not an earthly coronal;

DE AMORE

Love is himself his own exceeding great reward,
A mighty lord!

Lord over life and all the ways of breath,
Mighty and strong to save
From the devouring grave;
Yea, whose dominion doth out-tyrant death,
Thou who art life and death in one,
The night, the sun;
Who art, when all things seem:
Foiled, frustrate and forlorn, rejected of to-day
Go with me all my way,
And let me not blaspheme.

THE DEAD CHILD

Sleep on, dear, now
  The last sleep and the best,
And on thy brow,
  And on thy quiet breast,
Violets I throw.

Thy scanty years
  Were mine a little while ;
Life had no fears
  To trouble thy brief smile
With toil or tears.

Lie still, and be
  For evermore a child !
Not grudgingly,
  Whom life has not defiled,
I render thee.

THE DEAD CHILD

Slumber so deep,
  No man would rashly wake ;
I hardly weep,
  Fain only, for thy sake,
To share thy sleep.

Yes, to be dead,
  Dead, here with thee to-day,—
When all is said
  'Twere good by thee to lay
My weary head.

The very best!
  Ah, child so tired of play,
I stand confessed :
  I want to come thy way,
And share thy rest.

CARTHUSIANS

Through what long heaviness, assayed in what strange fire,
Have these white monks been brought into the way of peace,
Despising the world's wisdom and the world's desire,
Which from the body of this death bring no release?

Within their austere walls no voices penetrate;
A sacred silence only, as of death, obtains;
Nothing finds entry here of loud or passionate;
This quiet is the exceeding profit of their pains.

From many lands they came, in divers fiery ways;
Each knew at last the vanity of earthly joys;
And one was crowned with thorns, and one was crowned with bays,
And each was tired at last of the world's foolish noise.

CARTHUSIANS

It was not theirs with Dominic to preach God's
holy wrath,
They were too stern to bear sweet Francis' gentle
sway ;
Theirs was a higher calling and a steeper path,
To dwell alone with Christ, to meditate and
pray.

A cloistered company, they are companionless,
None knoweth here the secret of his brother's
heart :
They are but come together for more loneliness,
Whose bond is solitude and silence all their
part.

O beatific life ! Who is there shall gainsay,
Your great refusal's victory, your little loss,
Deserting vanity for the more perfect way,
The sweeter service of the most dolorous Cross.

Ye shall prevail at last ! Surely ye shall prevail !
Your silence and austerity shall win at last :
Desire and mirth, the world's ephemeral lights
shall fail,
The sweet star of your queen is never overcast.

CARTHUSIANS

We fling up flowers and laugh, we laugh across the wine ;
With wine we dull our souls and careful strains of art ;
Our cups are polished skulls round which the roses twine :
None dares to look at Death who leers and lurks apart.

Move on, white company, whom that has not sufficed !
Our viols cease, our wine is death, our roses fail :
Pray for our heedlessness, O dwellers with the Christ !
Though the world fall apart, surely ye shall prevail.

THE THREE WITCHES

All the moon-shed nights are over,
And the days of gray and dun;
There is neither may nor clover,
And the day and night are one.

Not an hamlet, not a city
Meets our strained and tearless eyes;
In the plain without a pity,
Where the wan grass droops and dies.

We shall wander through the meaning
Of a day and see no light,
For our lichened arms are leaning
On the ends of endless night.

We, the children of Astarte,
Dear abortions of the moon,
In a gay and silent party,
We are riding to you soon.

THE THREE WITCHES

Burning ramparts, ever burning!
To the flame which never dies
We are yearning, yearning, yearning,
With our gay and tearless eyes.

In the plain without a pity,
(Not an hamlet, not a city)
Where the wan grass droops and dies.

VILLANELLE OF THE POET'S ROAD

Wine and woman and song,
Three things garnish our way:
Yet is day over long.

Lest we do our youth wrong,
Gather them while we may:
Wine and woman and song.

Three things render us strong,
Vine leaves, kisses and bay;
Yet is day over long.

Unto us they belong,
Us the bitter and gay,
Wine and woman and song.

We, as we pass along,
Are sad that they will not stay;
Yet is day over long.

VILLANELLE OF THE POET'S ROAD

Fruits and flowers among,
What is better than they :
Wine and woman and song ?
Yet is day over long.

VILLANELLE OF ACHERON

By the pale marge of Acheron,
Methinks we shall pass restfully,
Beyond the scope of any sun.

There all men hie them one by one,
Far from the stress of earth and sea,
By the pale marge of Acheron.

'Tis well when life and love is done,
'Tis very well at last to be,
Beyond the scope of any sun.

No busy voices there shall stun
Our ears: the stream flows silently
By the pale marge of Acheron.

There is the crown of labour won,
The sleep of immortality,
Beyond the scope of any sun.

VILLANELLE OF ACHERON

Life, of thy gifts I will have none,
My queen is that Persephone,
By the pale marge of Acheron,
Beyond the scope of any sun.

SAINT GERMAIN-EN-LAYE

(1887–1895)

THROUGH the green boughs I hardly saw thy face,
They twined so close : the sun was in mine eyes ;
And now the sullen trees in sombre lace
Stand bare beneath the sinister, sad skies.

O sun and summer ! Say in what far night,
The gold and green, the glory of thine head,
Of bough and branch have fallen ? Oh, the white
Gaunt ghosts that flutter where thy feet have sped,

Across the terrace that is desolate,
And rang then with thy laughter, ghost of thee,
That holds its shroud up with most delicate,
Dead fingers, and behind the ghost of me,

Tripping fantastic with a mouth that jeers
At roseal flowers of youth the turbid streams
Toss in derision down the barren years
To death the host of all our golden dreams.

AFTER PAUL VERLAINE

I

Il pleut doucement sur la ville.

RIMBAUD.

TEARS fall within mine heart,
As rain upon the town :
Whence does this languor start,
Possessing all mine heart ?

O sweet fall of the rain
Upon the earth and roofs !
Unto an heart in pain,
O music of the rain !

Tears that have no reason
Fall in my sorry heart :
What ! there was no treason ?
This grief hath no reason.

AFTER PAUL VERLAINE

Nay! the more desolate,
Because, I know not why,
(Neither for love nor hate)
Mine heart is desolate.

AFTER PAUL VERLAINE

II

Colloque Sentimental

Into the lonely park all frozen fast,
Awhile ago there were two forms who passed.

Lo, are their lips fallen and their eyes dead,
Hardly shall a man hear the words they said.

Into the lonely park, all frozen fast,
There came two shadows who recall the past.

"Dost thou remember our old ecstasy?"—
"Wherefore should I possess that memory?"—

"Doth thine heart beat at my sole name alway?
Still dost thou see my soul in visions?" "Nay!"—

"They were fair days of joy unspeakable,
Whereon our lips were joined?"—"I cannot tell."—

"Were not the heavens blue, was not hope high?"—
"Hope has fled vanquished down the darkling sky."—

So through the barren oats they wanderèd,
And the night only heard the words they said.

AFTER PAUL VERLAINE

III

Spleen

Around were all the roses red,
The ivy all around was black.

Dear, so thou only move thine head,
Shall all mine old despairs awake!

Too blue, too tender was the sky,
The air too soft, too green the sea.

Always I fear, I know not why,
Some lamentable flight from thee.

I am so tired of holly-sprays
And weary of the bright box-tree,

Of all the endless country ways;
Of everything alas! save thee.

AFTER PAUL VERLAINE

IV

THE sky is up above the roof
So blue, so soft!
A tree there, up above the roof,
Swayeth aloft.

A bell within that sky we see,
Chimes low and faint:
A bird upon that tree we see,
Maketh complaint.

Dear God! is not the life up there,
Simple and sweet?
How peacefully are borne up there
Sounds of the street!

What hast thou done, who comest here,
To weep alway?
Where hast thou laid, who comest here,
Thy youth away?

TO HIS MISTRESS

THERE comes an end to summer,
To spring showers and hoar rime;
His mumming to each mummer
Has somewhere end in time,
And since life ends and laughter,
And leaves fall and tears dry,
Who shall call love immortal,
When all that is must die?

Nay, sweet, let's leave unspoken
The vows the fates gainsay,
For all vows made are broken,
We love but while we may.
Let's kiss when kissing pleases,
And part when kisses pall,
Perchance, this time to-morrow,
We shall not love at all.

TO HIS MISTRESS

You ask my love completest,
As strong next year as now,
The devil take you, sweetest,
Ere I make aught such vow.
Life is a masque that changes,
A fig for constancy!
No love at all were better,
Than love which is not free.

Erewhile

JADIS

EREWHILE, before the world was old,
When violets grew and celandine,
In Cupid's train we were enrolled :
Erewhile !
Your little hands were clasped in mine,
Your head all ruddy and sun-gold
Lay on my breast which was your shrine,
And all the tale of love was told :
Ah, God, that sweet things should decline,
And fires fade out which were not cold,
Erewhile.

IN A BRETON CEMETERY

They sleep well here,
These fisher-folk who passed their anxious days
In fierce Atlantic ways ;
And found not there,
Beneath the long curled wave,
So quiet a grave.

And they sleep well
These peasant-folk, who told their lives away,
From day to market-day,
As one should tell,
With patient industry,
Some sad old rosary.

And now night falls,
Me, tempest-tost, and driven from pillar to post,
A poor worn ghost,
This quiet pasture calls ;
And dear dead people with pale hands
Beckon me to their lands.

TO WILLIAM THEODORE PETERS ON HIS RENAISSANCE CLOAK

THE cherry-coloured velvet of your cloak
Time hath not soiled : its fair embroideries
Gleam as when centuries ago they spoke
To what bright gallant of Her Daintiness,
Whose slender fingers, long since dust and dead,
For love or courtesy embroidered
The cherry-coloured velvet of this cloak.

Ah! cunning flowers of silk and silver thread,
That mock mortality ? the broidering dame,
The page they decked, the kings and courts are dead :
Gone the age beautiful ; Lorenzo's name,
The Borgia's pride are but an empty sound ;
But lustrous still upon their velvet ground,
Time spares these flowers of silk and silver thread.

TO WILLIAM THEODORE PETERS

Gone is that age of pageant and of pride:
Yet don your cloak, and haply it shall seem,
The curtain of old time is set aside;
As through the sadder coloured throng you gleam;
We see once more fair dame and gallant gay,
The glamour and the grace of yesterday:
The elder, brighter age of pomp and pride.

THE SEA-CHANGE

WHERE river and ocean meet in a great tempestuous frown,
Beyond the bar, where on the dunes the white-capped rollers break ;
Above, one windmill stands forlorn on the arid, grassy down :
I will set my sail on a stormy day and cross the bar and seek
That I have sought and never found, the exquisite one crown,
Which crowns one day with all its calm the passionate and the weak.

When the mad winds are unreined, wilt thou not storm, my sea ?
(I have ever loved thee so, I have ever done thee wrong

THE SEA-CHANGE

In drear terrestrial ways.) When I trust myself
to thee
With a last great hope, arise and sing thine ultimate,
great song
Sung to so many better men, O sing at last to me,
That which when once a man has heard, he heeds
not over long.

I will bend my sail when the great day comes; thy
kisses on my face
Shall seal all things that are old, outworn; and
anger and regret
Shall fade as the dreams and days shall fade, and in
thy salt embrace,
When thy fierce caresses blind mine eyes and my
limbs grow stark and set,
All that I know in all my mind shall no more have
a place:
The weary ways of men and one woman I shall
forget.

Point du Pouldu.

DREGS

THE fire is out, and spent the warmth thereof,
(This is the end of every song man sings!)
The golden wine is drunk, the dregs remain,
Bitter as wormwood and as salt as pain;
And health and hope have gone the way of love
Into the drear oblivion of lost things.
Ghosts go along with us until the end;
This was a mistress, this, perhaps, a friend.
With pale, indifferent eyes, we sit and wait
For the dropt curtain and the closing gate:
This is the end of all the songs man sings.

A SONG

All that a man may pray,
Have I not prayed to thee?
What were praise left to say,
Has not been said by me
O, ma mie?

Yet thine eyes and thine heart,
Always were dumb to me:
Only to be my part,
Sorrow has come from thee,
O, ma mie?

Where shall I seek and hide
My grief away with me?
Lest my bitter tears should chide,
Bring brief dismay to thee,
O, ma mie?

A SONG

More than a man may pray,
Have I not prayed to thee?
What were praise left to say,
Has not been said by me,
O, ma mie?

BRETON AFTERNOON

HERE, where the breath of the scented-gorse floats
through the sun-stained air,
On a steep hill-side, on a grassy ledge, I have lain
hours long and heard
Only the faint breeze pass in a whisper like a
prayer,
And the river ripple by and the distant call of a
bird.

On the lone hill-side, in the gold sunshine, I will
hush me and repose,
And the world fades into a dream and a spell is
cast on me;
And what was all the strife about, for the myrtle or
the rose,
And why have I wept for a white girl's paleness pass-
ing ivory!

BRETON AFTERNOON

Out of the tumult of angry tongues, in a land alone,
apart,
In a perfumed dream-land set betwixt the bounds
of life and death,
Here will I lie while the clouds fly by and delve an
hole where my heart
May sleep deep down with the gorse above and red,
red earth beneath.

Sleep and be quiet for an afternoon, till the rose-
white angelus
Softly steals my way from the village under the
hill:
Mother of God, O Misericord, look down in pity on
us,
The weak and blind who stand in our light and wreak
ourselves such ill.

Come let us go down.

VENITE DESCENDAMUS

Let be at last; give over words and sighing,
  Vainly were all things said:
Better at last to find a place for lying,
  Only dead.

Silence were best, with songs and sighing over;
  Now be the music mute;
Now let the dead, red leaves of autumn cover
  A vain lute.

Silence is best: for ever and for ever,
  We will go down and sleep,
Somewhere beyond her ken, where she need never
  Come to weep.

Let be at last: colder she grows and colder;
  Sleep and the night were best;
Lying at last where we can not behold her,
  We may rest.

TRANSITION

A LITTLE while to walk with thee, dear child;
To lean on thee my weak and weary head;
Then evening comes: the winter sky is wild,
The leafless trees are black, the leaves long dead.

A little while to hold thee and to stand,
By harvest-fields of bending golden corn;
Then the predestined silence, and thine hand,
Lost in the night, long and weary and forlorn.

A little while to love thee, scarcely time
To love thee well enough; then time to part,
To fare through wintry fields alone and climb
The frozen hills, not knowing where thou art.

Short summer-time and then, my heart's desire,
The winter and the darkness: one by one
The roses fall, the pale roses expire
Beneath the slow decadence of the sun.

EXCHANGES

All that I had I brought,
Little enough I know;
A poor rhyme roughly wrought,
A rose to match thy snow:
All that I had I brought.

Little enough I sought:
But a word compassionate,
A passing glance, or thought,
For me outside the gate:
Little enough I sought.

Little enough I found:
All that you had, perchance!
With the dead leaves on the ground,
I dance the devil's dance.
All that you had I found.

TO A LADY ASKING FOOLISH QUESTIONS

WHY am I sorry, Chloe? Because the moon is far:
And who am I to be straitened in a little earthly star?

Because thy face is fair? And what if it had not been,
The fairest face of all is the face I have not seen.

Because the land is cold, and however I scheme and plot,
I can not find a ferry to the land where I am not.

Because thy lips are red and thy breasts upbraid the snow?
(There is neither white nor red in the pleasance where I go.)

TO A LADY

Because thy lips grow pale and thy breasts grow
dun and fall ?
I go where the wind blows, Chloe, and am not
sorry at all.

RONDEAU

Ah, Manon, say, why is it we
Are one and all so fain of thee?
Thy rich red beauty debonnaire
In very truth is not more fair,
Than the shy grace and purity
That clothe the maiden maidenly;
Her gray eyes shine more tenderly
And not less bright than thine her hair,
  Ah, Manon, say!
Expound, I pray, the mystery
Why wine-stained lip and languid eye,
And most unsaintly Maenad air,
Should move us more than all the rare
White roses of virginity?
  Ah, Manon, say!

On death-bed

MORITURA

A SONG of the setting sun!
  The sky in the west is red,
And the day is all but done:
  While yonder up overhead,
    All too soon,
There rises, so cold, the cynic moon.

A song of a winter day!
  The wind of the north doth blow,
From a sky that's chill and gray,
  On fields where no crops now grow
    Fields long shorn
Of bearded barley and golden corn.

A song of an old, old man!
  His hairs are white and his gaze,
Long bleared in his visage wan,
  With its weight of yesterdays,
    Joylessly
He stands and mumbles and looks at me.

MORITURA

A song of a faded flower!
'Twas plucked in the tender bud,
And fair and fresh for an hour,
In a lady's hair it stood.
Now, ah, now,
Faded it lies in the dust and low.

Release me.

LIBERA ME

GODDESS the laughter-loving, Aphrodite, befriend!
Long have I served thine altars, serve me now at the end,
Let me have peace of thee, truce of thee, golden one, send.

Heart of my heart have I offered thee, pain of my pain,
Yielding my life for the love of thee into thy chain;
Lady and goddess be merciful, loose me again.

All things I had that were fairest, my dearest and best,
Fed the fierce flames on thine altar: ah, surely, my breast
Shrined thee alone among goddesses, spurning the rest.

LIBERA ME

Blossom of youth thou hast plucked of me, flower
of my days;
Stinted I nought in thine honouring, walked in
thy ways,
Song of my soul pouring out to thee, all in thy
praise.

Fierce was the flame while it lasted, and strong
was thy wine,
Meet for immortals that die not, for throats such
as thine,
Too fierce for bodies of mortals, too potent for
mine.

Blossom and bloom hast thou taken, now render
to me
Ashes of life that remain to me, few though they
be,
Truce of the love of thee, Cyprian, let me go free

Goddess the laughter-loving, Aphrodite, restore
Life to the limbs of me, liberty, hold me no more
Having the first-fruits and flower of me, cast me
the core.

TO A LOST LOVE

I SEEK no more to bridge the gulf that lies
Betwixt our separate ways;
For vainly my heart prays,
Hope droops her head and dies;
I see the sad, tired answer in your eyes.

I did not heed, and yet the stars were clear;
Dreaming that love could mate
Lives grown so separate;—
But at the best, my dear,
I see we should not have been very near.

I knew the end before the end was nigh:
The stars have grown so plain;
Vainly I sigh, in vain
For things that come to some,
But unto you and me will never come.

WISDOM

Love wine and beauty and the spring,
  While wine is red and spring is here,
And through the almond blossoms ring
  The dove-like voices of thy Dear.

Love wine and spring and beauty while
  The wine hath flavour and spring masks
Her treachery in so soft a smile
  That none may think of toil and tasks.

But when spring goes on hurrying feet,
  Look not thy sorrow in the eyes,
And bless thy freedom from thy sweet:
  This is the wisdom of the wise.

IN SPRING

See how the trees and the osiers lithe
Are green bedecked and the woods are blithe,
The meadows have donned their cape of flowers,
The air is soft with the sweet May showers,
And the birds make melody:
But the spring of the soul, the spring of the soul,
Cometh no more for you or for me.

The lazy hum of the busy bees
Murmureth through the almond trees;
The jonquil flaunteth a gay, blonde head,
The primrose peeps from a mossy bed,
And the violets scent the lane.
But the flowers of the soul, the flowers of the soul,
For you and for me bloom never again.

A LAST WORD

Let us go hence: the night is now at hand;
The day is overworn, the birds all flown;
And we have reaped the crops the gods have sown;
Despair and death; deep darkness o'er the land,
Broods like an owl; we cannot understand
Laughter or tears, for we have only known
Surpassing vanity: vain things alone
Have driven our perverse and aimless band.

Let us go hence, somewhither strange and cold,
To Hollow Lands where just men and unjust
Find end of labour, where's rest for the old,
Freedom to all from love and fear and lust.
Twine our torn hands! O pray the earth enfold
Our life-sick hearts and turn them into dust.

NEW POETRY

NEW POEMS BY

OLIVE CUSTANCE

(LADY ALFRED DOUGLAS)

3s 6d net

Daily Telegraph.—"Marked throughout by daintiness and charm, and a felicity of phrasing that cannot fail to please."

Daily Chronicle.—"She successfully expresses her individuality in glowing and eloquent verse, and also in verse that is airy and florally graceful."

WORKS BY LASCELLES ABERCROMBIE

INTERLUDES AND POEMS

5s net

Times.—"Mr. Abercrombie has power and he has originality."

Mr. JOHN MASEFIELD in *Daily News.*—"'Blind' is a very fine poem. Mr. Abercrombie writes with a delicacy and insight truly poetical."

Spectator.—"Mr. Abercrombie is a refreshing figure to meet with in modern poetry. He has thought, imagination, and a rude gusto of style."

EMBLEMS OF LOVE

DESIGNED IN SEVERAL DISCOURSES

5s net

English Review.—"Has by this work put himself into the forefront of contemporary English poets."

Eye-Witness.—"Nothing I can say can express a shadow of the majesty, the grandeur, and the power of mind that has given this stirring and beautiful achievement to our time."

DEBORAH: A Poetic Play

2s 6d net

POEMS

BY ROSAMUND MARRIOTT WATSON

5s net

Daily Telegraph.—"One of the best true poets of our time . . . wonderful power of concise description."

POEMS

BY LUCY MASTERMAN

3s 6d net

A graceful, delicate volume of verse.

JOHN LANE, THE BODLEY HEAD, LONDON, W.

NEW POETRY

The POEMS of WILLIAM WATSON

Edited and arranged, with an Introduction, by
J. A. SPENDER

In 2 Volumes. With Portrait and many New Poems
Crown 8vo. Price 9s net

Times.—"William Watson is, above all things, an artist who is proud of his calling and conscientious in every syllable that he writes. To appreciate his work you must take it as a whole, for he is in a line with the high priests of poetry, reared, like Ion, in the shadow of Delphic presences and memories, and weighing every word of his utterance before it is given to the world."

Spectator.—"The two volumes will be welcomed by the poet's numerous admirers. There is a pleasure in the possession of a complete edition of a great writer's works. . . . We must apologise for quoting so copiously, but the book is so full of beautiful things that in his pleasure at seeing them all together the critic is irresistibly tempted to take them out and remind his readers of them separately."

The WORKS of FRANCIS COUTTS

THE REVELATION OF ST. LOVE THE DIVINE: A POEM. 3s 6d net
THE ALHAMBRA, AND OTHER POEMS. 3s 6d net
THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS: A POEM. 3s 6d net
THE POET'S CHARTER: OR THE BOOK OF JOB. 3s 6d net
MUSA VERTICORDIA: POEMS. 3s 6d net
THE ROMANCE OF KING ARTHUR. 5s net
THE HERESY OF JOB: A STUDY OF THE ARGUMENT. Illustrated with the "inventions" of William Blake. 5s net
THE SONG OF SONGS: A LYRICAL FOLK-PLAY OF THE ANCIENT HEBREWS, arranged in seven scenes. With Illustrations by Henry Osprovat. Leather, 1s 6d net. Cloth, 1s net

EGYPT

3s 6d net

Daily Telegraph.—"Mr. Coutts deserves all credit for his reticence, his dignity, and the calm vigour of his workmanship. . . . He is certainly among the elect band of poets, with whom high thought and polished workmanship go always hand in hand."

PSYCHE

3s 6d net

JAMES DOUGLAS in the *Star.*—"It is a poem finely wrought. Its diction is noble. It is radiant with verbal felicities and lucent images. A thing of beauty that ought to be a joy for ever to the lover of poetry."

JOHN LANE, THE BODLEY HEAD, LONDON, W.

00042979

Digitized with financial assistance from
Shri Brihad Bhartiya Samaj
on 11 March, 2020